
BELL's
BRITISH THEATRE.

VOL. XXIII.



BELL's
BRITISH THEATRE.

CONSISTING OF

THE MOST ESTEEMED

ENGLISH PLAYS.

VOL. XXIII.

CONTAINING
MEROPE, BY HILL.
MAHOMET, — MILLER.
CYMON, — GARRICK.
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FATAL CURIOSITY, — LILLO.

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1797.



BRITISH THEATRE

ENGLISH PLAYS



7 JE 32

Act IV

MEROPE.

Act I



Le Wilder vine!

Charman's note.

MR. MIDDLETON as EUMENES.

Eum. Scarcely did I hear that right!

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M E R O P E.

A

TRAGEDY.

BY AARON HILL.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by Inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON,

Printed for, and under the Direction of, JOHN BELL,

British Library, STRAND,

Bookseller to His Royal Highness the PRINCE OF WALES.

M D C C X C V.

17
MEROPH

TRAGEDY

BY ALFRED HILL

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION



THE GREAT COURT

REPRODUCED FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM

By permission of the Trustees

Printed by the Trustees of the British Museum, at the British Museum Press, London.

LONDON

Printed for the Trustees of the British Museum, at the British Museum Press, London.

PROLOGUE.

TOUCH'D be your generous hearts to spare this play,
Where mirth would laugh humanity away.
Two thousand years our tale has shook the stage,
And mov'd the heart of Greece from age to age :
Ev'n Alexander wept our queen's despair,
And the world's conqueror sat conquer'd there :
What reach of taste could Attic pride presume,
What flame of courage e'er distinguish'd Rome,
But Britain's sons may boast an equal merit
Would Britons think and act with British spirit ?
Ye flatt'ring triflers of an hour too short,
Ye fools to thinking, and ye friends of sport,
Forbear to laugh when pensively distrest.
Sighs in yon circle swell the beauteous breast ;
Charms to the fairest face soft sorrow lends ;
Pity and innocence are bosom friends ;
And when deep anguish shakes a feeling mind,
How must it ache when witslings sneer behind !
Nor dream, ye gay, that only mirth should please ;
No sprightly wit e'er laugh'd off life's disease :
Experience tells us soon or late comes care,
And he who flies from thought will meet despair.
Ladies, be firm to passion's tend'rest claim ;
Sighs are love's breezes, and will fan the flame.
Laughing gallants may promise merry lives,
But laughing husbands make you weeping wives.

*They whose own hearts can feel will treat yours best,
And he gives pain that thinks it but a jest.
Nobly weep out, nor let an ill-tim'd blush
Keep back the struggling tear that longs to gush.
All that are wise and brave by nature know
'Tis virtue's mark to weep at others woe.*

Dramatis Personæ

DRURY-LANE.

Men.

POLYPHONTES, General of Mycene	-	-	Mr. Palmer.
EROX, Favourite of Polyphontes	-	-	Mr. Hurst.
EUMENES, Son of Merope	-	-	Mr. Cauthery.
EURICLES, a Lord of Merope's Party	-	-	Mr. Aickin.
NARBAS, Fosterfather to Eumenes	-	-	Mr. Packer.

Women.

MEROPE, Widow of the late King	-	-	Miss Younge.
ISMENE, Daughter of Narbas	-	-	Miss Hopkins.

Chief Priest, and other Priests.

Ladies, Officers, Guards, &c.



MEROPE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*An Apartment in the Palace. MEROPE mournful on a Couch.
ISMENE leaning melancholy below, and Attendants.*

Ismene.

SEE where the lone majestic mourner weeps,
Lost ev'n to music's power—Try, strain each note
In melody's wide compass—haply
Some change thro' sad to lively may have force
To strike recov'ring sense and wake regard.
—First in low sympathy of sorrow's softness
Soothe her dejected soul—then start at once
To swells of joy, and storm attention's ear.

*[Music with Trumpets. After the Music Merope
rises and comes forward.]*

Mer. Let me, when next thy too officious love,
Faithful Ismene, tries th' harmonious charm,
Let me have music solemn all and slow,
Sad-suited to my thoughts—Mix not for me,
Who have no power to taste such sprightly notes,
As they who are more happy find more sweet,

Ism. Why, when the gods grow gentle, are you sad?
You felt their anger sharply—now they smile,

Embrace their proffer'd bounty—All the lords
Of glad Mycene, in full senate met,
Take measures to proclaim you reigning queen;
You whom distress but brightens, to whose charms,
Made awful by your grief, woes add new majesty.

Mer. What, no news yet of Narbas or my son?

Ism. May it be soon—No prince of birth like his,
Where'er conceal'd, can 'scape such search unknown.

Mer. Will ye at length, ye Powers! reward my tears?
Will ye at last restore Eumenes to me?

If he yet live—this only remnant heir
Of his wrong'd mother's miseries, oh, save him!
From his dear breast strike wide the murderer's dagger.

Is he not your's, a branch from great Alcides?

“What tho'—forget it and be hush'd, oh, faith!”

What tho' to traitors' prosp'rous swords you gave
His father's fated life—Ah! yet desert not
This image of his form that fills my soul!

Ism. Dear though he doubtless was, and justly mourn'd,
Should you exclude all sense of bliss beside?

Mer. I am a mother—with a mother's fears.

Ism. But can a mother's fears efface the stamp
Of hero's soul that marks a race like your's?
Sweet tho' his infant smiles, they dwell too fix'd,
Too deep, on your touch'd memory—Long years
Are past since first you lost him.

Mer. Lost him!—never—

In twice seven dreadful years no moment's light
Broke on my eyes, but brought his image with it.
Why tell'st thou me of time?—days, months, and years,
Have grown, but with 'em grew my pain to lose him.
Weigh that last fatal hint thy father sent me;
Hope soon, said he, to see the prince Eumenes
All you would wish—Fear all from Polyphontes.

Ism. Wisely you fear him—but 't were wiser still
So fearing to prevent him. Hear the states ;
Quit at their prayer this regent's name ; be crown'd,
And rise, indeed, the queen they meant to make you.

Mer. Is not the crown my son's ?

Ism. A son so lov'd,
Should he return, would thank——

Mer. Perish the heart
That, meanly proud, and poorly fill'd for self,
Swells from another's losses !

Ism. Public interest——

Mer. Curse on all interest that includes not honesty !
But here ev'n interest brings no plea to tempt me.
What can a childless mother hope from empire ?
What has distress to do with pomp's vain lustre ?
I see the very light of heaven with pain.
Never shall splendour cheer these blasted eyes
That saw my bleeding lord, my murder'd children,
Saw my friends fall, saw men and gods forsake me.
Oh, guilt ! oh, perfidy ! oh, death's dire day !
Present for ever to my frightened soul.

Ism. Oft have I wept to hear that sad day's tale.

Mer. I hear it now——ev'n yet their cries rise round me ;
Save, save the king ! save the poor gasping princes !
Save the distracted queen !——I scream——I fly——
On ev'ry side I turn, meet battling crowds,
Swords, glitt'ring spears, loud shouts, and mingled groanings ;
Meet last—a sight—beyond all sense of horror !
Meet an expiring husband's outstretch'd eye,
Strain'd with a death-mix'd tenderness on mine——
And struggling from his blood to reach and clasp me.

Ism. Patience, oh, madam, and forget these horrors.

Mer. There two expiring infant sufferers fell,

The eldest of our loves—duteous in death,
 'Cross the king's breast they threw their little bodies,
 And lent their hands—weak aid! to save their father:
 Only Eumenes 'scap'd th' assassins' fury;
 Some interposing god vouchsaf'd to veil him;
 And he who screen'd him then may once restore him.
 Narbas, thy wise, thy faithful father, bore him
 Far from my sight to some dark safe retreat,
 "Some desert, barren of distress and man."

Enter EURICLES.

Ism. Madam—Lord Euricles——

Mer. Welcome—What hope?

Eur. Vain was our search—from Peneus' bank it spread
 O'er vast Olympus: far and wide thro' Greece
 Inquiry lab'ring lost its fruitless prayer:
 Description could not wake the least idea:
 None knew, none ever heard, of Narbas' name.

Mer. Alas! he breathes no more!—my son is dead.

Ism. So fear makes real ev'ry fancy'd woe.
 You 'ave heard that on report of this new peace
 My father guides him secret to our hopes.

Eur. Just was his caution! Narbas, wisely loyal,
 Veils his return, and cautiously conveys him.
 Narbas knows all his dangers—I meanwhile,
 Watch with a guardful eye these murderers' motions,
 And with determin'd hand prepare to save him.

Mer. On faith so try'd as thine ev'n woe leans easy.

Eur. Doubt but my power's defect; my will finds none.
 But I have news more threat'ning:
 Th' assembled senate vote, in warm debate,
 A consort in your crown——

Mer. Presumptuous care!
You should have call'd it insult.

Eur. Words were vain.
Truth unsustain'd by power but fights to fall.
The partial people roar for Polyphontes,
And right, and law, and pity, sink before him.

Mer. Can fortune then reduce the great to pity?
Can kings in their own realms contract to slaves?

Eur. Something must be resolv'd to check their speed.

Mer. Yes, I will face these lords of kings and law,
Comets of empire; these portentous stars
That sparkle by the fire they steal from majesty;
I will go dart truth's lightning in their eyes,
And thunder in their ears the rights of thrones:
I will revive lost sense of trust and duty,
I will assert their sov'reign's near return. [Going.]

Eur. Oh, heaven! be wary—that way ruin lies.
Their tyrant leader starts already, fir'd
By that alarm, and dreams of what he dreads.

Mer. What can he more, so much already done?

Eur. Jealous of danger, men make haste in guilt,
Work to be safe, and hold no means too wicked.
Mycene, but by faction freed from faction,
Claim'd like a conquest he computes his own.
No tie so sacred binds endanger'd valour
Where hot ambition spurs it—Ev'ry rampart
Gives way before him; law, corrupted, guards him;
Wealth dresses, poverty attends, pride leads,
And priesthood presses gods who hate—to serve him.

Mer. I see th' abyss before me—Let it be:
If I plunge in and crush this Polyphontes,
'Tis but to fall for vengeance.

Eur. Soft!—he comes.

[*Exeunt Euric. and Ism.*]

Mer. Wear, for a moment, heart! the veil thou hat'st.

Enter POLYPHONTES.

Polyp. Ever in tears my queen!—Lend a long truce
To sighs, and cast aside your needless sorrow:
Shake from those injur'd eyes each cloud that dims 'em,
And to the voice of love vouchsafe your ear.
You frown——

Mer. I do indeed, and gaze with horror.

Polyp. Gaze on—I am no stranger to myself,
Nor to a woman's passions. I grew grey
Beneath a weight of winters spent in arms.
I know time's furrows are no paths to love;
I know it all—but wisdom knows it not.
Weigh not my offer in disdain's light balance.
You are the daughter, mother, wife of kings;
But the state wants a master. What avails
Vain title till some sword like mine supports it?

Mer. Bold subject of a king who call'd me wife,
Dar'st thou defame the memory of thy lord
With such audacious hope?—Aspire to me!
Me to supplant my child, my heart's whole care,
Stain his dishonour'd throne with guilt and thee!
Me canst thou dream so base to wed thy lowness,
And crown with empire's wreath a soldier's brow?

Polyp. Soldier! immortal gods! who more deserves
To govern states than he who best can save?
He who was first call'd King ere that was soldier;
Great because brave, and scepter'd by his sword.
I am above descent, and prize no blood:
Scarce is my own left mine; 't is lost for glory,

Spilt in my country's cause, in your's, fair scorner!
Take safety—'t is my gift. Fill half my throne;
My party calls all mine; love shares it your's.

Mer. Party! thou fell provoker of reproach!
Party should tremble where a monarch rules.

Polyp. There will be parties, and there must be kings,
And he who best can curb was formed to reign.
I who reveng'd your lord by right succeed him.

Mer. Succeed him, traitor!—Has he not a son?
Gods were his great forefathers—thence his claim.

Polyp. Far other value bears Mycene's crown.
Right to rule men is now no longer held
By dull descent, like lands low hermitage;
'T is the pluck'd fruit of toil; 't is the paid price
Of blood lost nobly; and 't is thence my due.

Mer. What hast thou done, thou wretch! to dare such hope?

Polyp. Bethink you of that day when these proud walls
Blush'd with the blood you boast from traitors' swords.
Review your helpless husband—see your sons
Expiring round you—wipe those gushing eyes,
And view me what I was, not then too low
To share your ruffled passions—Yes, 't was I
From your freed palace chas'd th' o'erwhelming foe,
Sav'd your Herculean sceptre and its queen;
I, I repell'd the woes you could but weep.
See there my right, my rank, my claim, to love!

Mer. Hear, hear him, Heaven, and give me back my son.

Polyp. Yes, let him come, this son—he shall be taught
Lessons of glory, taught my arts to reign.
Joy to the blood of Hercules!—I too
Revere, let others dread it—My ambition
Climbs beyond progeny—To spring from gods
Is less than mine who like a god command.

Mer. If thou wouldst emulate a god, be just:
Man can be brave too boldly—Hercules
Sav'd many a king—but did he steal their diadems?
Wouldst thou resemble Hercules—protect
Unfriended innocence, assert thy prince,
Restore th' unhappy wand'rer to my arms,
Cease to afflict, and give him to my fondness.
Thus could thy influence move, so try'd, so courted,
Who knows—for gratitude has power like love—
Who knows—how far I might forget my glory—
And—if peace dwells with thee—Expect it not—
I will not bid you hope—that I can stoop
So low—bend I am sure I cannot. [Exit *Mer.*

Enter EROX.

Erox. Ent'ring I heard her too presumptuous scorn,
And wonder'd at your patience. Waits a king
For a weak woman's wish to fix his throne?
Greatly and bravely have you clear'd your way
To the hill's foot, yet when it courts your climbing
Fall back to sigh, and seek her hand to lead you.

Polyp. Near as thou think'st I stand, my warier eye
Marks 'twixt the throne and me a precipice
Where Faith or I fall headlong—Does not Merope
Know her Eumenes near?—Should he return
Th' inconstant people would with shouts receive him,
And smooth his way to empire o'er my bosom.
Thou know'st from proofs most timely intercepted
This new boy-king returns, and hopes Mycene.

Erox. Trust your high fortune, and disdain to doubt.
Foresight and fierceness are the brave man's gods,
And his own hand supports him.

Polyp. My late order—

Erox. 'T was with a silent firmness well obey'd.
From Elis to Mycene, ev'ry road
Is watch'd by sleepless warders—If they come,
Narbas and he, their gods must march before them,
Or not Alcides' blood could 'scape the shedding.
Your soldiers' zeal is warm.

Polyp. But is it blind?

Erox. It is—none knows his name whose life he waits;
All they have yet been told is a sad tale
Of an old wily traitor leading with him,
On murd'rous purpose, an assassin youth,
Urg'd by exacted oaths to seek your death.

Polyp. But what this rumour of Misanthus kill'd
Before Alcides' temple?—is that true?

Erox. Too sure he fell—I chose his trusty arm,
Join'd with his martial brother's, as most fit
To guard the likeliest station; where, should Narbas
Dare with his exile touch Mycene's border,
First they would rest, to beg that godhead's care,
From whom their race presumes its proud descent.

Polyp. 'T was forecast worthy of a zeal like thine,
Nor could thy care have chosen an abler hand,
Or one more try'd in blood, than that Misanthus.
'T was he, thou know'st, that faithful to my cause,
On that black night attending near Cresphontes,
Taught the king's sword, amid the dusk of slaughter,
To pierce its master's breast—An act so daring
Deserv'd the sword, tho' three rich gems adorn'd it:
He had it, and he wore it for his pains.

Erox. Yet at Alcides' temple drew it rashly,
And lost it with his life.

Polyp. How scap'd his brother?

Erox. Scar'd out of mem'ry's use, all he could tell me
Was that the god inspir'd some dreadful form,
Some more than mortal monster—and he fled.

Polyp. Vile safety!—left his brother unreveng'd,
And shunn'd a soldier's death—We must be watchful.
Some infelt bodings bid me call this stranger
Eumenes or his friend.

Erox. That fear was mine,
Till on reflection that he came alone
It look'd unlikely—Chance it as it may
Whene'er he this way comes he comes to die.

Polyp. True—yet I could have wish'd to spare this crime :
But one first chosen the rest grew necessary :
So falls the son—the mother must not follow ;
Her I have need of. Marriage mends my reign ;
Her rightful title consecrates ambition,
And usurpation whitens into law.

—The people love her : I possessing her
Hold her friend too in dowry—*Erox* !—thou
Whose fate grows close to mine, assist my scheme.
Skill'd how to spread craft's nets, allure the people,
Train 'em by ev'ry art ; poise ev'ry temper ;
Avarice will sell his soul ; buy that and mould it ;
Weakness will be deluded ; there grow eloquent.
Is there a tott'ring faith ? grapple it fast
By flatt'ry, and profusely deal my favours :
Threaten the guilty, entertain the gay,
Frighten the rich, find wishes for the wanton,
And rev'rence for the godly—let none scape thee :
Dive into hearts, sound ev'ry nature's bias—
And bribe men by their passions—But these arts,
Already thine, why waste I time to teach thee ?

Vainly the sword successful scales a throne,
 Since Fortune changing strength's lost hope is flown;
 But art call'd in attracts reluctant will,
 And what were lost by power is gain'd by skill. [Exeunt.]

ACT II. SCENE I.

The Palace. Enter MEROPE, EURICLES, ISMENE.

Merope.

Is the world dumb on my Eumenes' fate?

Is. Calamity too soon had found a tongue.

Mer. Has nothing from the borders yet been heard?

Eur. Nothing that claims your notice.

Mer. Who is he,

This prisoner, I am told but now brought guarded?

Eur. A rash young stranger, caught with guilty hand
 Red from the recent marks of some new murder.

Mer. A murder! as unknown!—Whom has he kill'd?
 How? and where was it?—I am fill'd with horror.

Is. Oh, sense too lively of maternal love!

All things alarm your tenderness. You hear
 Chance speak, and take her voice for that of Nature.

Mer. What is his name? whence came he? why unknown?

Eur. He seems, and is, if truth may trust appearance,
 A youth of that soft stamp which Fortune leaves
 To Nature's gentlest care; some nymph's Adonis,
 Whose eye might sooner be suppos'd to kill
 Th' unpiety'd maid, than his gay sword the man.

Mer. Whom, tell me, has he kill'd—answer—I'll see him.

Eur. What strange emotion this!—

Mer. No matter—bring him:

If I discover guilt t'is mine to punish;
If wrong'd I owe him mercy.

Eur. —Should he have merit
'Tis plac'd so low by Fortune—

Mer. Fortune's faults,
Where merit suffers, call on king's to mend 'em.

Eur. What can a wretch like this deserve from power?

Mer. Oh, Euricles! look inward; ask thy heart;
Be for a moment but this wretch thyself—
And then acquit the power that scorn'd to note thee.
“—Besides, who knows? he may—Be still, prompt fear.
“Perhaps my troubled mind starts hints too lightly:
“Hearts that have ev'ry thing to fear slight nothing.
“—Let him be brought—I will myself examine him.”

Eur. Your will must be obey'd.

Mer. Go, my Ismene,
Bid those who guard the prisoner bring him hither. [*Ex. Ism.*

Mer. Stay, Euricles; [*Euricles offering to go.*
Stay, and partake more terrors—Could you think it?
Press'd by new sorrows I forget my past,
And have not yet inform'd you—Polyphontes
Has dar'd demand my hand, dar'd talk of marriage.

Eur. Oh, Queen!
I know his offer'd insult, know it stains
Your name, yet blushing add—your forc'd consent,
Grown infamously necessary—stands
The sole safe bar 'twixt all your race and ruin.

“*Mer.* 'Tis horror but to think so vile a dream!

“*Eur.* So thinks the army—so the senate thinks,
“So thinks th' exacting gods—and so—

“*Mer.* The gods!—
“Why were they nam'd—could they forgive such fall
“From their own offspring to a son of clay?”

Eur. The king your son——

Mer. Ah! name not him—How, Euricles,
How would he thank my choice of such a father?

Eur. Princes grow wise by sorrows: he will see
That hated choice the root of all his safety.

Mer. What, what have you been telling me?

Eur. Hard truth,
Due from firm loyalty to weak distress.

Mer. Can Euricles then plead for Polyphontes?

Eur. I know him guilty—but I know him rash,
Know him resistless—know him childless too,
And know you love Eumenes.

Mer. Loving him
How can I choose but hate the hand that wrongs him?
Princes should be above these self-securing,
And born to live for truth—or die for glory.

[Sits and weeps, regardless of Eumenes' entrance.]

Enter ISMENE; Guards, with EUMENES in Chains.

Eum. [*to Ism.*] Is that the queen so fam'd for miseries?

Ism. It is.

Eum. How sweetly awful!—how adorn'd by sorrows!

Ism. Why dost thou pause? the queen admits thee nearer.

Eum. No wonder so much sweetness, so distress'd,
Mov'd ev'n so greatly distant—as to me,
And drew me from my desert!—Give me leave
To stand a while—and gaze unmark'd and note her.
—Oh, ye protecting gods! whate'er becomes
Of an abandon'd nameless thing like me,
Bless this supreme unfortunate!

Ism. Madam—the prisoner waits.

Mer. [*turning to observe him.*] A murderer this!—
Come forward, stranger.

—A mien like this a murderer's!—Can it be!
That looks so form'd for truth, so mark'd for innocence,
Cover a cruel heart?—Come nearer, youth!
Thou art unhappy; bid that Fate protect thee,
And speak as to an ear that loves the wretched.

Answer me now—Whose was the blood thou shedd'st?

Eum. Oh, Queen!—Yet—for a moment—spare my tongue.

Mer. Murder and modesty!—whence all this shame!

Eum. Respect, confusion—something here—unnam'd,
And never felt till now—have bound my tongue;
But oh! do justice to your power to shake me,
And let not hesitation pass for guilt.

Mer. Go on—who was he whom I 'm told thou hast kill'd?

Eum. One who with wrongs and insult urg'd my rashness.
Young blood takes fire too aptly.

Mer. Young! was he young!
Ice at my conscious heart were warm—compar'd
With what he chills my soul with!—Didst thou know him?

Eum. I did not. All Mycene's earth and air,
Her cities and her sons, are new to me.

Mer. What! was he arm'd this young assaulter? Came he
With malice or for robbery? Be of comfort:
If he attack'd thee thy defence was necessary,
And sad necessity makes all things just.

Eum. Heaven is my witness I provok'd him not:
'T is not in valour's wish to offer insult,
And sure it is no crime to check it offer'd.

Mer. On then—relate the chance that led thee hither.

Eum. Entering your borders I beheld a temple
Sacred to Hercules, the god my soul,
Low as my lot was cast, aspires to honour.
—What should I do, bare vot'ry as I was?
I had no off'rings, brought no victims with me.

Poor and oppress'd by fortune what I could
I gave—I knelt, and pour'd a heart before him
Warm as a hundred hecatombs! pure, humble,
Pious, and firm—Th' unhappy can no more.
I ask'd not for myself his undue blessing,
I pray'd protection to his own high race,
For I had heard, great Queen! your wrongs requir'd it.
The present god, methought, receiv'd my prayer;
His altar trembled, and his temple rung,
Keen undulating glories beam'd about me;
I know not how I bore it—but my heart,
Full of the force infus'd, at once grew vaster;
My swelling courage far above myself
Sustain'd me—and I glow'd with all the god.

Mer. [*rising in emotion.*] Go on, methinks the god thou
nam'st speaks in thee,

And ev'ry hearer glows, as warm'd as thou!

Eum. I bow'd, and left the temple—Following came
Two men of haughty stride, with angry low'r:
Roughly accosting they reproach'd my pray'r:
How did I dare, they ask'd, solicit Heaven
To aid sedition's purposes? No god
Should save a wretch like me, proscrib'd by power.
—I heard astonish'd, and prepar'd to speak,
When with impatient fierceness each rais'd arm
With rage conjoin'd came on.

Mer. [*interrupting.*] Both!—Came they
To wound thee?—

Eum. Both with madman's frenzy
Struck at my breast ignobly.

Mer. Thou hast eas'd me.
Go on—These men had souls that match'd their fate.

Eum. Unarm'd and inoffensive, so surpris'd,

The god I had address'd repaid my prayer.
 —Warding the weakest stroke with swordless hand,
 Swiftly I clos'd, and seiz'd the wrested steel
 From him whose stronger arm more nearly press'd me;
 Seiz'd it with lightning's swiftness, for oppression
 Rouses distress to vengeance—On himself
 I turn'd his pointed weapon, sav'd my breast,
 And plung'd it in his own—He fell—the other
 Started, and curs'd, but like a coward fled,
 False to his dying fellow—Mighty Queen!
 This is the sad short truth; may the kind power
 I bow'd to, touch your ear and move your pity!

Mer. She were a tigress that could hear this tale
 And pause upon thy pardon—Still go on.
 How wert thou seiz'd? hide nothing, and hope all.

Eum. Shock'd by uncertain dread for what was done
 I gaz'd astonish'd round, and mark'd beneath,
 Where at a furlong's distance the salt wave
 Broke on the shore. Sudden I snatch'd the corpse,
 And hast'ning to the beach gave it to the sea:
 That done I sigh'd and fled. Your guards, great Queen!
 For what escapes such eyes as Heaven's and your's!
 Unseen by me mark'd all, follow'd, and took me.

Mer. [*to Euricles.*] Did he resist when seiz'd?

Eum. I could not, madam;
 The name of Merope disarm'd my will.
 They told me they were your's; I bow'd and yielded,
 Gave 'em my new-gain'd sword, and took their chains.

Eur. This youth by him he kill'd was judg'd another.

Mer. Oh, I have noted all, and Heaven was just.
 —Retire to farther distance, gentle youth!—
 I'll tell thee, Euricles,
 Methought at ev'ry word this wanderer spoke

Pity—or something tenderer than pity,
Clung to my tender heart-strings ; nay, 't was stranger !
For I will tell thee all—Cresphontes' features,
“ Heav'ns ! what ideas hopes and fears can raise ! ”
My dear dead manly lord's resembled features ;
I saw and trac'd (I blush to think what folly !)
Trac'd—in this cottage hero's honest face.

Ism. Compassion is a kind and generous painter ;
—Yet Truth herself must grow as blind as Fortune
Ere she could look on that unhappy youth
And find him less than worth her kindest pity.

Eur. Ismene speaks my thoughts ; he's innocent ;
The gods have stamp'd their mark of candour on him
And no impostor's art inhabits there.

Mer. [*to Eumenes.*] Again approach me—In what part of
Greece

Did it please Heaven to give thee birth, good youth ?

Eum. [*advancing.*] In Elis, generous Queen !

Mer. In Elis—Tell me,

I hop'd it had been nearer—hast thou ever
In thy low converse heard the swains thy neighbours
Mention the name of Narbas—or Eumenes ?
—The last thou must have heard of.

Eum. Never, madam.

Mer. Never ?—that's strange ! What then was thy con-
dition,

What thy employment, and thy father's name ?

Eum. My father was a shepherd learn'd and wise ;
Prince of the sylvan shades and part'ral vale
He led th' attracted hearts of list'ning swains
And pleas'd 'em into subjects—in himself
Too humble for distinction—had not virtue
Compell'd him into notice—

He liv'd unenvy'd ; for excelling all
 He veil'd superiour eminence by modesty ;
 No claim'd exemption eas'd his life from care ;
 Peacefully poor, and rev'rently belov'd,
 His fleecy harvests fed him, and his name
 Was Policletes, madam.

Mer. What thy own ?

Eum. Low, like my past'ral care—to cottage ears
 Adapted—and unform'd for your regard,
 —Yet Elis oft' may deign to speak of—Dorilas.

Mer. Oh, I have lost my hope : Heaven mocks relief,
 And ev'ry starting spark is quench'd in darkness.
 So then your parents held no rank in Greece ?

Eum. Did rank draw claim from goodness they have rights
 Would leave all place behind 'em : “ inborn virtue
 “ Can borrow no enlargement, but lends all
 “ That keeps contempt from titles.”

Mer. Ev'ry word

He utters has a charm ?——But why at home
 So bless'd, and to such parents doubly dear,
 Didst thou, forgetful of the care thou owed'st 'em,
 Quit their kind cot and leave 'em to their tears ?

Eum. A vain desire of glory first seduc'd me.
 Oft' have I heard my father mourn Mycene,
 Weep for her civil wars and suff'ring queen ;
 Oft' had he charm'd my young aspiring soul
 With wonder at your firmness—So inflam'd
 I learnt by slow degrees to think my youth
 Disgrac'd by homefelt virtues, weigh'd the call
 Of glory against duty, and grew bold
 To hope my humble arm might add some aid
 To prop your warring standards—See, great Queen !
 The only motive of my erring rashness ;

For Heaven has taught me, tho' it loves your cause,
I merit my distress, who left my father,
Wanting perhaps in age's feeble calls
Some help I might have lent him—'T was a fault;
But 't was my first, and I may live to mend it. [*Aside.*]

Mer. Methinks I hear Eumenes—So my soul
Informs me had he known descent thus lowly
So my Eumenes would have thought and spoke.
—Such is his age where'er conceal'd he mourns,
Perhaps too such his fortune—driven like this
From realm to realm, a wanderer thus unknown!
Friendless and hopeless, and exposed to poverty!
—I will have pity on this youth's distress,
And cultivate his fortune—What bold noise?

[*Shouts heard without.*]

Whence can such rudeness flow!—What is't, Ismene?

Ism. [*at a window.*] All ills are Polyphontes. The vile
rabble

Shout, their sure vote for treason. Polyphontes
Is king proclaim'd—and hope is now no more.

Eum. Oh for the sword once more your gaards took from
me!

Now, now, I feel these chains; now first they bind me.

Mer. Give him his sword, let him be free as air.
Honest proposer!—But thy help's too weak
To prop a throne in danger—

Eum. Oh, queen!—forgive presumption in the poor,
When they dare pity greatness.
All have their mis'ries—but when crowns grow wretched
'T is arrogance in mean ones to complain. [*Exit.*]

Eur. Too fatally I prophesy'd—Confess
This hard necessity which now you find,
And seem at least to sooth the tyrant's hope.

Mer. I misconceiv'd the gods: I durst not dream
They could have bid guilt thrive and given up virtue.

Eur. They will not, madam.

Mer. So my sad heart still
Struggles to hope, and if they mark my woe
They will forgive my rashness.

Eur. Come what must
I will assemble round you the few faithful,
And, failing to protect, partake your fall. [Exit.

Mer. Oh, people! people! they who trust your faith
Bid the wild winds blow constant.

Ism. The people's voice is call'd the voice of gods.

Mer. What villain baseness wants some bold pretence
That drags in Heaven to grace it! thefts, plots, perjuries,
Avarice, revenge, the bloody zeal of pride,
And unforgiving bitterness of heart,
All—have their gods to friend, their priests to sanctify.

Enter EURICLES with a sword.

Eur. Sorrow on sorrows bear down hope's last prop.
Now be a queen indeed!—arm your great heart
With preparation to its utmost stretch,
For if it stand this shock, its power's immortal.

Mer. No—I am sinking from all sense of pain,
And shall grow safe by want of strength to suffer.
Speak—there is now but one sad truth to dread,
And my soul waits it heard—then rests for ever.

Eur. It has pleased Heaven—this sword! this fatal sword.

Mer. I understand thee; thou would'st say he's dead.

Eur. Oh! 'tis too surely so; th' atrocious crime
At last succeeded—and all care is vain.

Mer. Gods! gods—'tis done—now all your bolts have
struck me!

Ism. Guard her distracted brain!

Eur. Save her, kind Heaven!

Mer. What have I done? where have I been?

Eur. Alas! where grief too oft'
Has left the unhappy—Recollect.

Mer. Oh, Euricles! I recollect too much:
Trust my sustaining heart, it breaks not yet.
Comfort's brief clouds, methought, came shadowing o'er me.
But I am found again, a wretch so friendless
That madness will not lend relief, but shuns me.

Eur. Perish that young, that impious hypocrite!
That ill-admir'd attractor of your pity,
Whom your protection spar'd for fancy'd virtue!

Mer. Who—what?—

Ism. Not Dorilas?

Eur. Him, him—that Dorilas.

Mer. Monster! beyond all credit of deceit!

Ism. He! 't is impossible.

Eur. He was the murderer;
I bring too clear a proof. Passing but now
I found him waiting, freed him from his chains,
And to re-arm him for the cause he chose
Call'd for his sword—which, as he stretch'd his hand
To take, I mark'd, and trembled at the view.
These once-known gems—too well remember'd here.

Mer. [*Taking the sword.*] Oh, all ye sleeping gods!
't was my Cresphontes';

'T was the king's sword, Narbas, beyond all doubting,
Sav'd it that dreadful night for my Eumenes,
Oh, what a false vile tale this flatterer form'd
To cheat us into pardon!

Take the dumb dreadful witness from my sight.

[*Giving Euricles the sword.*]

Yet stay—return it me— [Resumes the sword and kneels.

I thank ye, gods!

Thank your inspiring justice, and accept it;
Live but to thank you for this dire due sacrifice,
Which from the childless mother's widow'd hand
Your heaven-directed vengeance well demands. [She rises.

Yes, I will sheathe it on my husband's tomb,

Deep in the bleeding murderer's panting heart,

"Then, scorning Polyphontes, pierce my own,"

So die reveng'd and safe—absolving heaven.

—Go, Euricles—

Eur. Not so—Yet bear his sight,
That from his own dire mouth we may compel
Discovery of his guilt's commission'd cause,
And to the bottom search this fatal tale [Exit Eur.

Ism. Erox!—the tyrant's minister of death.

Enter EROX.

"Erox. [Aside] Now aid me, wily powers of winning art!"

Mer. How now! What bold intrusion plac'd thee here?

Erox. Queen of the kingdom's lord, his heart's high empress!
Suffer a voice unequal to the task

To wrong th' intrusted sense of his told grief,

Who sends me to condole you—Polyphontes,

Had you but smooth'd that brow's majestic bend,

I meant to 've said the king—this moment heard

The fate most pity'd of the prince your son,

Heard, and takes equal part in all your wrongs.

Mer. More than his part he takes in what is mine,

Else had he never dar'd aspire to seize

His master's throne, or name my murder'd son.

Erox. Wishing, he waits but leave. Respect is delicate,

And would not, unadmitted, now approach.
Fain would he talk of comfort to your sorrows,
Who weeping wants the power to curb his own.

Mer. What would your artful sender come to say?

Erox. To beg that to his hand you would commit
This hateful murderer's punishment—He glows
For vengeance in your cause; should think, his claim
Unworthy a crown's trust, less worthy your's,
Could he forget that justice props a throne.

Mer. No, tell him no; my hand revenges here;
Too short of reach, heaven knows! but what it can
It shall, and neither asks nor bears his aid.

Erox. The king too tenderly regards your will
To cross it ev'n in anger—less in reason.
—I humbly take my leave.

Mer. "I grant it gladly." [Exit Erox.
Hunted on ev'ry side, why waits distress
Till still new growths of anguish more oppress?
How poor a thing is life dragg'd on to age,
To stand the pity'd mark of Fortune's rage!
Death shuts out mis'ry, and can best restrain
The bite of insult, and the goad of pain. [Exit.

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Tomb of CRESPHONTES.

NARBAS alone.

HAIL, venerable scene! hail, sacred shade!
Hail, sad-sought manes of my long-lov'd lord!
My eyes' last object on Mycenian earth.
Was thy dear life and empire lost in blood,

Now late returning, from their first mourning search,
 Finds in this cold still tomb the whole shrunk reach
 Of thy contracted reign; yet here, ev'n here,
 Were thy Eumenes render'd back, ev'n here
 Narbas had held some hope to sooth thy ghost.
 How shall I meet his mother's mournful eye,
 Who bring new weight to woes o'ercharg'd before!
 From ev'ry madd'ning street I hear loud shouts;
 Those execrable bawds to flatter'd power
 Proclaim the traitor Polyphontes king,
 He who from clime to clime track'd our sad way,
 Held like a hunted deer his prince in chase,
 Hot in pursuit for murder!—Each known prospect,
 Each point, each outlet, of this neighb'ring palace
 Brings to afflicted mem'ry some new stroke
 Of sorrow fresh to pain—tho' fifteen winters
 Have snow'd their whiteness on me since they fell!
 Would I could find the face of some old friend!
 But what court friendship's life lasts fifteen winters?
 Soft—whom has heaven sent here? If Innocence
 Dwells yet on earth, such looks as these must house it.

[Starts as Ismene comes nearer.]

Bless the resembled mother's copy'd softness!
 'Tis my Ismene, 'tis my own dear daughter!
 Time cannot hide her from a parent's eye,
 Child as she was—and chang'd since last I saw her.

*Enter ISMENE, followed by a train of Virgins in white, who
 bring baskets, and strew flowers on the tomb.*

Ism. Who is this bold unknown, so sagely form'd,
 Yet indiscreetly rude—at such an hour
 To break abruptly on the queen's sad purpose?

Nar. Fairest of forms——

Ism. Who are you?

Nar. Chide me not,
Sweet picture of the powers who shed soft pity!
I am a nameless, friendless, weak, old man:
Once I was a servant to the queen you serve;
Oh, grant the gracious privilege to see her!

Ism. Rev'rend and wise; the first I see you are,
The last my heart conceives you—what a time
Have your misguided wants unaptly chosen!
Your sight would now offend her—deep distress,
From dire solemnity of purpose brings her:
'Twere prudent to withdraw.

Nar. [*In a low tone of voice.*] Come near, Ismene.

Ism. Immortal powers! who can it be? he knows me!
Fain would I dare mix hope with fear and wonder.

[*Approaching him.*]

Nar. Thou art my child. Kind Heaven has sent thee to me.
—Be cautious, and observe.

Ism. [*Kneeling.*] Prophetic heart.
Oh, sir—I cannot speak!

Nar. [*Raising her.*] Hide thy surprise,
Ere yet some dangerous note detects our meeting.
Soft as thy eyes, Ismene, be thy voice,
And answer to my question—Round this tomb
Why thus assembled moves that virgin train?

Ism. Alas! the afflicted queen
Distracted comes—to offer on this tomb
Her life's last sacrifice—a dreadful victim!—
The murd'rer of her son.

Nar. Eumenes dead!

Ism. Alas! sir, could you be a stranger to it?

Nar. Blast of my soul's best hope!—Who dar'd this villany?

Ism. A youth who found him in Alcides' temple;

One from whose air of manly modesty
None surely could have fear'd.—Behold, he comes:
That fetter'd criminal is he—Oh, sir!
Where will ye now be hid?

Nar. In death, Ismenè,
If I now hear and see, and am not dreaming.

Ism. From the queen's eye I dare no longer—

Nar. Stay:—
Queens, kings, nor gods, shall tear thee from my arm
Till thou hast heard me fully.

Solemn procession to a dead march. Enter MEROPE, EURICLES with the sword; EUMENES in chains; Guards, Priests, as to sacrifice. The Queen goes up weeping, and kneels silent at the tomb, while the rest range themselves on each side of the scene.

“Nar. [To Ism.] Some black-soul'd fiend, some fury
risen from hell,
“Has darken'd all discernment!—Call'dst thou not
“That fetter'd youth the murderer of Eumenes?
“Ism. I call'd him so, too truly.
“Nar. He is Eumenes!—
“What angry god misleads the queen to madness?
“She dreams Eumenes kill'd, and kills Eumenes!
“Ism. Now are my heart's late trembling's well explain'd.
“Quick let me rush, and warn her erring hand.
“Nar. Not for a thousand worlds—to save him so
“Were but to lose him surer—Polyphontes
“Has ears and eyes too near us—
“I may anon find means, when all are busy'd,
“To hide myself unmark'd amidst the crowd.”

[Sad and solemn music, then a Song of Sacrifice by the Chief Priest.]

*Hear from the dark and silent shade ;
Hear, ye pale bands of death :
Gliding from graves, where once your bones were laid,
Receive a murderer's breath.*

Chorus of Priests and Virgins.

Receive a murderer's breath.

Mer. [*Rising and coming forward.*] Where is this victim,
odious to all powers
But one—the dreadful Nemesis ? [*The Guards bring up Eum.*
Eur. Yet ere he dies
'Twere fit some force of torture should compel him
To name his vile accomplices.

Mer. It shall.

Say, monster ! what provok'd thee to this guilt,
And what associates join'd thee.

Eum. I appeal——

The gods, who find it fit my soul should buy
At this dear rate the moment's hope you lent it :
Those gods can witness for me, they who curse
The perjurd, and disclaim the base one's safety :
My lips detest imposture :
—Nor know I by what change in Heaven's high will
I, who of late so bless'd had touch'd your pity,
Fall now beneath your anger.

Mer. View this sword. [*Taking the sword from Eur.*
Know you the dreadful object ?

Eum. 'T was the villain's
My just hand punish'd with it.

Mer. Seize him, rend him,
Swift to the destin'd altar drag the traitor :
He owns it, glories in his bloody crime,
And my shock'd soul aches at him. [*The Guards seize him.*

Eum. Off——away——

[*Struggling.*

Spare your officious grasp——I will be heard
One last loud word——in spite of arms and insult.

Mer. [*After a signal to the Guards, who quit Eumenes.*]
Thou then who deal'st in death, canst find death fearful.

Eum. No, madam, you mistake: death shakes the happy;
But he who is a wretch receives him gladly.
—Yet 'gainst imputed guilt the humblest wrong'd
Rise bold in innocence.

——Tell me, nor let your pride deface your pity,
Whose so high-rated blood was this I shed?

——If he was dear to you curs'd be my memory
Or I had rather lost my own than his!

Mer. Where has this cruel wretch been taught deceit?
Why was that look, so like Cresphontes—his! [*Half fainting.*

Eur. Great queen! sustain your purpose; think of vengeance,

The laws of nature, and the lives of kings.

Eum. Do laws and kings then call injustice vengeance!
Shame on the great! Why long'd my eyes for courts?
“ Courts! where the pride of guilt lays claim to honour!
“ —Haughty of heart why have they souls thus abject?
“ They threaten, praise, fright, flatter, and insult me!
“ —Yet, oh! 't was just.”——I left my father rashly,
Felt not the pangs, weigh'd not the tears I cost him.
Fate drew me from my forest's guiltless quiet,
Deaf to the warnings of a father's wisdom,
And a griev'd mother's bodings.

Mer. Mother, said he!

Barbarian! hast thou yet a mother left thee?
I was a mother too——till thy fell hand
Depriv'd me of a son, and all life's comforts.

Eum. A son!——your son!

Mer. Mine, monster! murderer! mine.

Eum. "If such was my misfortune, such my curse."

If Heaven has made it possible—that he
Who in a fatal moment err'd—and fell
By my ill-destin'd rashness, was your son,
Earth holds not such another wretch as I am,
And mercy's faintest glimpse should shun to reach me—

Mer. Mercy! thou hypocrite—If thou dar'st pray,
Raise thy dumb hands, and ask in vain from Heaven
The mercy thou deny'st my dying son.

Eum. Yet hear——

Mer. Stop his detested mouth,
Force the doom'd victim to the altar's foot,
Veil him from light, no more to be beheld;
Hide his quench'd eyes for ever.

[*Two Priests approaching with a veil, he snatches it, and
throws it from him.*]

Eum. Off, ye vain forms!

Cover the eyes of cowards, mine disdain ye:
Mine can with stedfast and advancing scorn
Look in death's face full-sighted—When it comes
'T is to be met not hid——

Welcome eternal day, bad world farewell.

[*Advances between the Priests to the Tomb, followed by
the Queen, Euricles, Ismene, &c.*]

Mer. [*At the tomb with the sword drawn, and Eumenes
kneeling ready.*] Shade of my murder'd husband—
hear my call.

Chorus of singers' voices] Oh hear!

Mer. Soul of my bleeding son, hear thou!

Chorus of singers' voices.] Oh hear!

Mer. Unexpiated souls—if in those glooms
Where walk the sullen ghosts of earth-wrong'd kings

You hear atonements voice, and wait redress,
Rise from your dire domains.

Chorus of singers' voices.] Oh rise!

Mer. Thou last

Tremendous power, pale goddess, present still!
To direful vengeance nerve this lifted arm,
And thus assisting——

*[Ismene preventing the blow, Narbas breaks into sight,
and cries out loudly.]*

Nar. Stay, stay that bloody purpose;
Death has already been too busy here,
And Heaven disclaims such sacrifice.

Mer. *[In a frightened and trembling attitude.]* Who art thou?

Eur. Oh, 'tis Narbas!

Cautious conceal this chance, or ruin finds him.

Ism. *[Aside to the Queen.]* Your victim is your son—the
Prince Eumenes.

[Merope lets fall the sword, astonished and trembling.]

Eum. *[Raising himself to look round.]* I heard a well-known
voice, now heard no longer.

Open, sad eyes, once more from the grave's brink,
And find what seem'd——Oh! 't is—it is—my father!

Nar. *[Aside to Eum.]* Hear, and be mute. Thy fate,
unwary youth,

Depends upon thy silence.

Eum. Whence, oh ye powers!

Can all these myst'ries rise?

Mer. Oh, 'tis too much!

And life and I are lost. *[Faints, and is supported by Ism.]*

Nar. Assist the queen.

Ism. Stay your unhallow'd rites; the queen's in danger.

Eur. Quit, rev'rend priests, your unpropitious sacrifice.

[Exeunt Priests.]

Follow me, guards; I will secure your victim.

Eum. Oh, father——

Nar. [*To Eum.*] Shun me, and patient wait th' important cause.

Eum. Oh, bid me ere I die but hope your pardon,
And if I leave you bless'd 't is all my prayer.

Nar. No more—the gods who love reward thy virtue.

[*The Soldiers and Euricles go off with Eumenes.*]

Ism. Kind Heaven restores the queen.

Mer. Where—whither have ye brought me?

Ismene, what means this? why weep, my virgins?

Oh, I have kill'd him! [*Looking wildly round her.*] For I see
him not;

And I am doom'd to pains in life immortal!

Nar. Ease your sad heart's too apprehensive startings:

Euricles has secur'd him, and nothing 's known.

Mer. Still that kind vision haunts me—Art thou Narbas?

Nar. Let my tears answer—In this gush of joy—

I give you back my trust, my king Eumenes.

Mer. [*On her knees.*] Oh, gracious Heaven! support a
woman's weakness,

And what my heart, yet panting, fails to utter,

Take from my soul's touch'd sense, and make my prayer.

You are too great for thanks, too good for duty. [*Rises.*]

Re-enter EURICLES hastily.

Eur. Death to th' insatiate tyrant's thirst of insult!

This royal scandal to the name he steals

Has with some fatal purpose seiz'd the king,

And holds him to examine.

Mer. Follow me;

Now shall he see what marks denote the queen,

What difference 'twixt the guilty and the wrong'd. [*Going.*]

Nar. Madam—it must not be.

Eur. Stay—curb this rashness.

Mer. Is he not mine? is he not yours, your king?

Eur. The moment you confess that dangerous truth
No god but hated Hymen saves Eumenes.

Mer. There thou hast let in light upon my soul—
Rather than wed this Polyphontes——

Nar. Wed him!

Wed Polyphontes!

Eur. Him.

Nar. The world's last groan
Wrapp'd in surrounding fires had less amaz'd me!

Eur. 'Tis with that view the people call him king.
Since he reveng'd Cresphontes' blood they say
He best——

Nar. He!—ev'ry curse of death surround him!
He! he reveng'd!—The villain's own damn'd train
Shed, spilt it. I beheld them, trac'd the fiend
Thro' all his dark disguises—thro' night's eye
Saw the pale murd'rer stalk amidst his furies.
His was the half-hid torch, the postern key,
That open'd to the rebels' rage the palace.
In the pierc'd infant breasts of two doom'd innocents
I saw him plunge his poignard, twice receiv'd it
Deep in my own, encumber'd with my charge,
Struggling to bear the third sav'd prince to shelter,
And track'd by my lost blood with pain escap'd him.

Mer. When will my growing horrors reach their end?
Oh! my fix'd hate was instinct! something fatal
Dwelt on his dreadful brow, and bade me shun him.
Blind, headlong, ill-discerning, noise-driv'n people!

Eur. [*Looking out.*] Soft, the tyrant comes!

Mer. “Can the gods leave that possible?”—

Narbas, be hid this moment—— [Exit Narbas.
Euricles——

Fly thou—find to my mournful son access,
Comfort his fears, but keep the secret from him. [Exit Eur.

Enter POLYPHONTES in nuptial robes, EROX and Train.

Polyp. Health to my sovereign late, now, so the states
Decree, my wife, my sister, and my soul!
Dress'd is the altar, and the priests attend—
Nay, do not turn aside, and shun your triumph:
Look, and admire the wonders of your power:
The god of love to-day smoothes all my wrinkles,
And I am taught by joy to smile back youth.
One care alone precedes impatient love;
They tell me your too tender heart recoil'd,
And lost your purpos'd vengeance—let it be!
Beauty was meant to wound a gentler way:
Mine be the stroke of justice. When I view
The murd'rous stripling thro' the grief he brought you,
Pity disdains his cause, and fate demands him.

Mer. I find myself, 't is true, too weak for vengeance:
Would I had power more equal to my wrongs!

Polyp. Leave it to me; 't is a king's right; I claim it.

Mer. I shall consider of it.

Polyp. Why? what doubt you?
Slackens your anger that your vengeance hesitates?
Is your son's mem'ry now less dear than lately?

Mer. Perish the will that wrongs him! but this murd'rer—
This youth—They tell me you suspect accomplices—
Were it not prudent to suspend his fate
Till he declares who join'd him?

Polyp. What expect you
To clear, besides your son's known fall?

Mer. His father's—

That was a cup of gall—Oh, conscious guilt,
How dumb thy voice, unlook'd-for, strikes the bold! [*Aside.*

Polyp. [*After a pause.*] Well—ev'n of that too, we our-
self will ask him.

Mer. You are too busy, sir, in a pursuit
That least admits your quick'ning.

Polyp. Strange perplexity!
That what most seeks your ease should most offend?
But spring it whence it may, the cause remov'd,
There ends the doubt and pain—this wretch shall die. [*Going.*

Mer. Barbarian! horrible! inhuman!—Sir,
Why have you sought to startle me—I fear'd
You meant to snatch my victim from my vengeance.

Polyp. But—shall he really die?

Mer. Die!—who—he die?

Polyp. This murd'rer of your son.

Mer. I go this moment,
And will alone examine him.

Polyp. Stay, madam.

This new embarrassment of mingled pains,
This tenderness in rage, these hopes, fears, startings,
This art to colour some ill-hid distress,
That casts confusion o'er your troubled soul,
Half sentences broke short, looks fill'd with horror,
Are nature's thin disguise to cover danger:
Something you will not tell alarms my caution,
And bids my summon'd fear take place of love.
In ent'ring here I had a glimpse but now
Of an old man who seem'd to shun my presence:
Why is he fled? who was he?

Mer. Scarce yet call'd

A king—and see, already fill'd with jealousies!

Polyp. Be kind and bear your part then—burthens shar'd
Press light the eas'd sustainers. Come, your hand.

Mer. A moment since you talk'd but of revenge,
Now 't is again all love—Away, keep separate
Two passions nature never yet saw join'd.

Polyp. Let it be so then; death shall straight remove
That obstacle, and one wish remains:
Follow at leisure you, while I prepare.

[*Exeunt Polyphontes, Erox, and Train.*]

Mer. Aft for me now, and save me, great Alcides!
To power like thine all things are possible,
And grief oppress'd on earth finds friends in heaven:
Then, when the woe-sunk heart is tir'd with care,
And ev'ry human prospect bids despair,
Break but one beam of heavenly comfort in
And a new race of triumphs thence begin.

[*Exit with Attendants.*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Castle of Polyphontes. Enter POLYPHONTES and EROX.

Polyphontes.

SHE has her views, I mine—I should have fear'd
Some hint's officious reach had touch'd her ear;
I should have dreamt her eyes had catch'd some glance
To guide discov'ry down the dark abyss
Where my close crime lies veil'd in dumb obscurity,
But that I know she is a woman, Erox,
And born to be capricious.

Erox. Pride, not distaste
Holds out her heart against you.

Polyp. Let her keep it ;
My hope is humbler, Erox ; 'tis her hand
I seek : hearts are girls' gifts to school-boy-lovers.
Now let her spleen start wild ; when time serves aptly
Means shall be found to curb it——Thou art come
From sounding this fierce captive son of wonder ;
What have thy thoughts concluded ?

Erox. 'T is not he ;
No race of Hercules need there alarm you :
This but some rural brave, of simple nature,
Void of ambition's flame ; bold, blunt, and honest ;
Fearless of menace, tasteless of reward ;
And wanting ev'n the wish to dare for power.
He cannot be Eumenes.

Polyp. Who then is he ?

Erox. He says he is a shepherd's son ; what more
He will not be provok'd nor brib'd to tell,
Firm without fierceness, without weakness gentle,
Open as day-light, yet as dumb as death :
Spite of my prejudice he forc'd my praise,
And hatred must admire him.

Polyp. Praise him on.

Be what or whom he may 't is fit he die.
The people, who conclude his punishment
Inflicted for Eumenes' fancy'd murder,
Will dream that race extinct, and cleave to me ;
So danger comes less near, nor shakes my throne.
What hast thou learn'd of that conceal'd presumer,
Who, when the arm of Merope was rais'd,
Restrain'd it with some power that touch'd her soul ?

Erox. The young man call'd him father. Chance, it seems

In that nice moment brought him to his view :
He mov'd the queen's compassion for his son,
Fled like a wanton from the good man's care,
Who in his search came sorrowing on from Elis.

Polyp. I cannot trust this tale : thou grow'st too credulous.
Mysterious caution hangs too thick a veil
O'er all their late proceedings. That old man
Left the queen's presence starting at my entrance.
Why was he hid, if a young rustic's father ?
Why should my coming fright him ? He has heard,
Since then, his son's redoubled danger dwells
But in my menaces ; yet he comes not near me.
I had ere now beheld him at my feet
Had his heart trembled with a father's terrors.

Erax. See, sir, he's free ; and mark, the queen, how near—

Polyp. I note it and determine,
Now, my sister——

*Enter MEROPE, ISMENE, EURICLES, EUMENES, and
Guards.*

Mer. You see, sir, I dare know and use my rights,
How had your will presum'd to seize my victim ?
Am I but queen of shadows, that my vengeance
Must move as you direct it ?

Polyp. Nobly urg'd !
The victim is your right, requires your hand ;
Mine had defac'd your vengeance—I assum'd
Pretence to aid it but to fire your languor.
Take courage ; I resign him ; with his blood
Wash this reluctant faintness from your heart,
And give it warmth to meet me at the altar.

Mer. Horrid and impious hope !

Polyp. Looks love so frightful ?

Eum. [*To Polyp.*] Who taught thee to associate love with cruelty?

What right has Cupid to a captive's blood?
 Yet mispresume not that I court thy pity;
 He has too poor a view from life to prize it.
 Whose death can only serve to shorten pain.
 But I am told thou call'st thyself a king;
 Know, if thou art one, that the poor have rights,
 And power in all its pride is less than justice.
 I am a stranger, innocent and friendless,
 And that protection which thou ow'st to all
 Is doubly due to me—for I'm unhappy.

Polyp. Protection is for worth; guilt calls for vengeance.

Eum. And what does wrong's licentious insult call for?
 In my own just defence I kill'd a robber;
 Law call'd it murder, and the queen condemn'd me:
 "Queens may mistake; ev'n gods who love grow partial."
 I can forgive th' injustice of a mother,
 And could have bless'd her hand beneath the blow:
 "Nature has weaknesses that err to virtue:"
 But what hast thou to do with mothers' vengeance?
 Law that shocks equity is reason's murder.

Polyp. So young, so wretched, and so arrogant!
 Methinks the pride of an Alcides' blood
 Could scarce have swell'd a soul to loftier boldness.

Mer. Pity presumptuous heat; 't is youth's prerogative.

Polyp. Meanwhile, how happy such unpolish'd plainness,
 To move defence from art so skill'd as your's!
 Your son sure lives.

Mer. Lives! and shall live: I trust him to the gods:
 They can, they did, they will protect him.

Polyp. What cannot woman's pity? None who marks

The willing pardon your soft looks ensure him
Can charge your heart with cruelty.

Mer. My looks

Perhaps hint meanings, prudence should decline
To lend too loud a tongue too—but there are
Whose heart speaks nothing, yet tells all my actions,

Polyp. Mark if I speak not now my heart's true language—
Traitor receive thy doom—— [*Drawing his sword.*]

Mer. [*Interposing.*] Strike here! here, murderer!
Menace my breast, not his.

Polyp. Whose heart speaks now?

Eum. Now, ye immortals! not to die were not
To triumph——To be pity'd here, so pity'd,
By such a queen as Merope!——'T is glory
That ev'ry power beneath a god might envy!

Polyp. If you would have him live, confess, who is he?

Mer. He is——

“*Eur.* [*To Ism.*] Oh! we are lost!

“*Ism.* All, all is hopeless.”

Polyp. If he has right in you be swift to own him,
Or lose him by your silence. [*Offers to kill Eumenes.*]

Mer. Stay—he is——

Polyp. Who? what?——Say quickly——

Mer. He is my son Eumenes.

Polyp. [*Starting and aside.*] 'T is as I fear'd, and all my
schemes are air. [*Stands pensively fix'd.*]

Eum. Heavens!—did I hear that rightly!

Mer. [*Embracing him.*] Thou art my son:
Loud in the face of men and ears of gods,
Cresphontes was thy father: I attest it,
I tell it to the winds, proclaim it, boast it!—
Hear it, thou soul of murder!—I have found him,
And if I lose him now whole Heaven shall curse thee.

Eum. I cannot comprehend it—yet I kneel
To thank you but for deigning to deceive me :
“ Bless’d is his fate who dies in such a dream !”

Mer. One way thou art deceiv’d—the mother’s love
Forgets the monarch’s danger—Polyphontes—

Polyp. [*Starting.*] Go on—I meditated—but speak, madam.

Mer. Thou now hast wrung from my affrighted heart
The secret that oppress’d it. Thou behold’st
Thy king distress’d before thee—Sigh if thou canst,
Sigh for the son, prince, mother, fame, and nature.

Polyp. How to resolve will ask some needful pause—
Meanwhile it shakes my faith to trust your story :
You hear the young man’s honesty disclaims
This greatness you would lend him.

Eum. Modest sense

Of my unequal worth compell’d some doubting,
But now ’t is truth contestless. Royal tears
Flow not for pity’d falsehood, and they prove it.

Mer. Tears touch not hearts of flint, and I will spare ’em.
Did your pride [*Kneels.*] hear me—for your pity cannot
See me an humble suppliant at your feet,
Now first confessing I can fear your anger :
This should beyond all proof of tears convince you
That Merope’s his mother—Still you frown :
I forget

My own long sorrows, all my wrongs and insults,
Smile to the future, and absolve the past—
Let him but breathe—to reign were to be wretched.
Cruel ! you answer nothing—Look less dreadful—
Ease my distracted soul, and speak some comfort.

Eum. Oh, madam ! quit that posture—My proud heart
Aspires to keep the glory you have lent it.
If I indeed was born to call you mother,

Why do I see and hear you not a queen? [*Raises her.*
 Not think my soul too haughty—No distress
 Absolves dejection: 't is the brave's prerogative
 To feel without complaining.

" Now—strike, tyrant—

" Courage restrain'd from act takes pride to suffer."

Polyp. [*To Mer.*] 'T is well, I have with just attention
 heard,

And in impartial silence weigh'd it all.

Your sorrow claims some right to call for mine,

And his high spirit charms me. I take him

[*Takes Eum. by the hand.*

Into my heedful care, remit his sentence,

And if found your's adopt him as my son.

Eum. Your's! said you?—your's!

Mer. Be patient, good Eumenes.

Pol. You know his destiny, you know what price

I rate his life at: smile and meet my wishes;

For may the gods conjointly curse my reign

If he survives refusal of my prayer!

Bethink you. In an hour I shall expect you,

Where at the altar to th' attesting powers

You may proclaim your choice. That moment makes him

My victim or my son. Till then, farewell.

Mer. You cannot be so cruel—Leave him with me:

To see him might persuade me.

Polyp. See him there,

See him in Hymen's Temple, Erox attend him. [*Exit Polyp.*

Eum. Oh queen! oh mother!

If I already dare assume a right

To call you by that dear, that awful name,

Think nothing that may misbecome your glory,

Do nothing that may mix contempt with mine.

I leave you to the care of Heaven and die.

Lead me to the tyrant. [Exit Eum. and Erox.]

Mer. Fly, follow, Euricles; hold thy kind eye
Fix'd to this tyrant's motions: fain would I dream
He threatens but to fright me.

"Eur. Willing hope

"So flatters to deceive you: too, too sure

"His purpose: ev'n by nature stern and bloody,

"How more when power and safety prompt this cruelty?"

[Exit Eur.]

Mer. Find thy good father, haste, Ismene, call him;
Tell him distress grows headstrong, and my soul
Sickens for want of counsel.

Ism. [Aside.] "What a blindness

"Is thirst of human grandeur! give me, gods!

"A cottage and concealment. Save the queen,

"And from the curse of courts remotely place me." [Exit Ism.]

Mer. [Alone.] No, there is none, no ruler of the stars
Regardful of my miseries——

Oh my beloved son! my eyes have lost thee ever;

"I shall no more snatch comfort from thy hopes,

"Or wonder at thy sweetness."

Why have the deities permitted this?

Why have they sported with a mortal's mind,

Unpitied its distraction? sent him to me

From a far distant land—sent him, for what?

To glut the murderer's sword who kill'd his father.

Yet you are just, ye gods!—Amazing darkness

Dwells o'er the eternal will, and hides all cause.

I must not dare to tax Almighty Power

For what I suffer from it. Let it but pay me

With that curs'd tyrant's punishment attain'd,

Let me but see myself depriv'd of him—

See him expell'd from light, from earth, from name,
Deep as the cheerless void below can plunge him,
And I will kneel [*Kneeling.*] a wretch, and thank your justice.

Enter ISMENE and NARBAS.

Nar. Oh, queen! august in woes! what wrongs are your's!

Mer. [*Rising.*] Yes, Narbas, I have sacrific'd my son—
Have given him up to death—have madly own'd him.
What mother who beheld her son as I did,
Doom'd and endanger'd, could have then kept silence?

Nar. Gen'rous purpose! gloriously you err'd,
And fell, but from a height 't was fame to reach.
Dry up your tears, and summon all your soul;
Time presses, and a moment lost is fate. [*Shouts heard.*]

Ism. [*Looking out.*] Uproar and cries without, in rising
wildness
Heard from the city, reach the palace walls;
Sure sign of new confusion.

Nar. I saw the tyrant meet th' expecting Priests,
Attended not in Hymeneal robes,
But vestments such as sacrifice demands,
And pomp of bloody rites at dreadful altars:
To these his hand consign'd the victim led,
And deaf'ning shouts receiv'd him—From the train
Of priestly horrors this way mov'd their chiefs,
Follow'd by loud licentious bursts of joy,
Amid th' enormous swell of whose coarse roar
All I distinctly heard was Polyphontes.

Mer. Where are my guards arm'd for my vengeance?
Call 'em.

Enter three Priests.

What, are you here already?—Out of my sight

Ye sanctify'd deceits! you whose bold arts
Rule rulers, and compel even kings to awe—
Begone, fly, vanish!——

Ye mouths of mercy, and ye hands of blood!

Chief Pr. Sorrows and wrongs claim privilege to rail,
And Heaven's affronted vot'ries must forgive.

Mer. Cool in your cruelty!—"Religion's veil
"Ill cloaks rebellion's license." Death was your errand;
Why talk you of forgiveness?—'tis not you's.

Chief Pr. Not in death's cause we come, but Heaven's
and love's.

If vows were plighted 'twixt the king and you
No power on earth dissolves 'em.

Mer. False as hell!

He knows I heard his hated vows with horror.
Slight insolence—To this ill-founded charge
Silence and scorn shall answer.

[Turning away.

Chief Pr. Gracious sovereign,
Suspend your anger; 'tis unjustly rais'd;
Enlighten and command us. Found too easy
In one wrong'd faith we twice perhaps have err'd,
Alike deceiv'd in both—Unbend that brow,
And deign to teach our doubt what name to give
This stranger, this young captive, to the king.

Mer. Give him the name you dare to misapply,
Call him your king—my son—my lost Eumenes.

Chief Pr. Hear that, prophetic soul!—High Heaven! I
tremble,

In dread this great discov'ry comes too late:
The shouting people croud the waiting altar,
And erring in their zeal mishail the day.
What can be shall be try'd to cross his doom.
They shall be taught with bold advent'rous speed

To save their sov'reign's right—And hence, rash queen,
Learn due repentance, and no more let loose
The rage of wrongs against the tongues of gods. [Ex. Pr.

Mer. This solemn sharpness of deserv'd reproach
Struck my too conscious guilt with infelt awe :
I have been warm too soon and just too late.
What tho' Religion's guardians taint her tide,
Pure is the fountain tho' the stream flows wide :
Too oft' her erring guides her cause betray,
Yet rage grows impious when it bars her way. [Exit

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Prison. Enter EUMENES, NARBAS, and EURICLES.

Eumenes.

THINK, think upon your danger ; fly, lov'd father !
Fly from the tyrant's power, and leave me to my fate.

Nar. All sense of my own danger lost in your's
I threw myself regardless at his feet :
Full of the fatal subject I began,
Uncautious in my transport. Starting conscience
Fled from the face of truth. He shunn'd to hear,
Broke short, reply'd 't was well, gave me permission,
Nay, full of seeming zeal, enjoin'd my coming—
Bade me go pay my last short debt of counsel,
And try to bend your heart to meet his will.

Eur. He added that his queen—he call'd her his—
I blush to name her such, but so he charg'd me :
Since, he said, in pity but for you
Yields a reluctant hand to close with his,
'T is time her son, whose life she holds so dear,

Aids his own int'rest, and confirms her safety.

—The rest he paus'd and thought, but held it in,
Frown'd a disdainful nod, and bade us leave him.

Eum. Slowly awaking from my dream of wonders

I seem reborn to some new world unknown,

Where ev'ry thing I meet with shocks my soul.

“ —You talk of dying, whilst I yet half doubt

“ Whether existing now I really live!”

If I am truly the lost wretch I seem,

If in Mycene now enclos'd I find

Queen Merope my mother—king Cresphontes

My father, murder'd—his fear'd murd'rer crown'd

With his stol'n diadem, and in it daring

Offer his widow'd queen a hand stain'd frightful

In her first husband's blood—All this to me

Seems, while I shrink in heav'n's fair light, and view

Yon mansions of the gods, who govern man—

Incredible! astonishing!—and horrid!

Eur. 'T is horrible indeed! too dark for thought!

—But reason's line wants depth to sound heaven's will.

Nar. Deign, my devoted prince! my king! my son!

Suffer me still to use that long-lov'd name—

Deign but to live—Time, chance, and fortune's changes

May vindicate your glory—Since the tyrant

Tempts to betray reward him with his own:

Deceive deceivers and deceit grows virtue.

Eum. This in thy forests, Elis! had I heard,

Ev'n there I should have blush'd to hear from Narbas!

But as I am—no more—

Kind was your motives!—Pitying my distress

You but forgot my duty.

Nar. Happy forests!

Would ye were ours once more! there Peace dwelt with us,

There Safety slept upon unguarded hills,
And ev'ry tree's soft shadow cover'd anguish.

“ Eur. Soft! behold! the tyrant comes!”

Enter POLYPHONTES, speaking to the foregoing.

Polyp. Retire, and wait without. [*Exeunt Eur. and Nar.*

—And thou, rash youth!

Whose unexperienc'd years and gen'rous plainness
Fill me with all the pity due to weakness,
For the last time I come to bring thee pow'r.
Leave to my toil to smooth thy future paths,
And root out faction's thorns which trouble empire.

—When I am dead, as age admits short stay,
Thou and my Merope will reign at ease,
And thank my painful cares, and love my memory.
—Why art thou dumb?—Pause on—I read thee rightly.
Thou hast, I know, a kind of stubborn pride
Call'd courage—and mistak'd it for a virtue:
—'Tis virtue when presumption drives it not,
But suffers thought to guide it.

Eum. Guiding thought

Has held me patient long—Now answer me,
Am I Mycene's monarch?

Polyp. For thy birth,

Be it as truth, or trick, or chance, conclude it;
If from some low, some nameless stock deriv'd,
Be humble and advis'd—and rise to greatness:
If happier offspring cast thee for a king
Make thyself worthy of the crown I mean thee.
—'Tis but to wait me to the marriage altar,
Where Love, and Merope, and Peace, attend:
There to the gods and me (Mycene's guardians)
Swear homage, and devote thy faithful sword.

That done, sports, joys, and safety, crown thy youth,
And in thy riper years expect the diadem.

—Determine——

Eum. 'T is determin'd.

Polyp. Tell me how?

Eum. Why am I left unfree to choose—yet press'd
To tell thee my decision?—The compell'd
To yield disgrace consent, and make faith doubtful.
—I am a captive: he who holds not freedom
Has not his will his own, and chooses nothing.

Polyp. Fierce amid misery! thou at once art brave,
And insolent, and wretched!—But beware,
Nor trust too far my pity of thy poorness.
I give thee yet some moments to resolve:
I go before thee; but my guards attend
To bring thee to the altar. Come determin'd
To swear, and hope my crown and live my son,
Or die a slave unown'd and lose thy name. [*Is going.*]

Eum. [*calling after him.*] Thou goest then?

Polyp. [*stopping.*] To expect thee.

Eum. I will come,
And with me (tremble to be told it) comes
The god that rais'd my race to root out tyrants.
Soon shall the throne thou stol'st no more be thine;
Horror and penitence shall pale those eyes
Whose daring insolence now frown on virtue;
Menace and insult then shall quit thy voice,
And groaning anguish grind it—What the gods
Restrain my hand from reaching happier sons
Of my immortal sire shall rise to execute,
And hurl thee from a power that hurts mankind.

Polyp. Here Narbas! Euricles!—You may return.

Enter NARBAS and EURICLES.

I leave him to your lessons. Too, too deeply
He feels their past impression: teach him better,
Or your exacted heads shall answer to me
For ev'ry well-known help I owe your hatred.
—Narbass, thy age I think might best be trusted:
Experience lays his dangers open to thee:
Thou as thou lov'st advise him—Whether born
The son of Merope or thine no matter.
I must adopt him mine—or death demands him. *[Exit.*

Eum. Where did this ill-instructed tyrant learn
To threaten for persuasion?—I suspect
He does not seem to doubt, but doubts indeed.
I share no blood of Hercules—He's gone,
And call'd me to his altar—Let us follow.

Nar. Stay—whither would such fatal rashness lead you?

Eur. The queen has friends, howe'er too weak, too few,
Who dare defend her cause. Give us but time
To weigh and to resolve, and these shall aid you.

Eum. No—in an hour so black so dire as this
If I must fall I will—I go—to try.
I task but my own heart and Heaven to aid me.
What god forsakes the friendless?

[Going out, meets Merope and Ismène.]

Mer. Stay my son——

Th' usurper sends me to thee—Rest unheard
His errand; but my own requires thy ear.
It has perhaps been told thee that the woman
Conquers the queen.

—Let no light credit of a guilt so shameful,
Insult the daughter, mother, wife—ah me!
And widow—of a king—Yet I must go,

Must at the altar lend my trembling hand,
And seem——oh heav'n!——

Eum. Oh, Madam! so to seem
Were so to be. Can solemn vows at altars
Leave room for art's evasions? "See me sooner
"Tinging the spotted stone with gushing blood,
"And my torn breast th' unseeming sacrifice.

"*Mer.* So look'd, so spoke—so sometimes frown'd
Cresphontes.

"Full of thy godlike father copy too
"The confidence he lent me. He had scorn'd
"To doubt me for a moment less than Merope."

"*Eum.* If I was guilty——think"——

Mer. ——No more——time presses;
Hear my resolving will and curb thy own.
Th' usurper of thy throne no sooner joins
My hand's suppos'd consent, than at the altar
He swears in all the pomp of priestly witness
To free thee from thy chains—and from that hour
Confirm succession thine——

Eum. Think at what price comes empire bought so dear.
Rather than see you wed this——

Mer. Rash again!——

Bound by an oath so witness'd by the gods
And all Mycene's priests—and all her peers—
He dares not break it, and thou liv'st to reign:
For me who have henceforth no call for life
I seek thy father in the glooms below.

Eum. ——No more.

—It shall not be—See, my repugnant soul
Shrinks from th' abhorr'd conception: the felt god,
The god glows in me, swells against controul,
And ev'ry springy nerve is active fire!

Come on, friends! father! mother!—trust my firmness:
See if I bear a heart that brooks this wrong,
That poorly pants for a base hour of life—
And let a woman's blood outdare a king's. [Going.

Mer. Oh stay! return—call; stop him.

Eur. Sir!

Nar. Prince!

Mer. Son!

Eum. [Returning.] Look out; see yonder; view my father's tomb.

Know you his voice? are you a queen?

Come, listen——

I hear him—Hark! my king, my father, calls!

Mer. Methinks the god

He talk'd of swells indeed his wid'ning soul,

Lifts him above himself—above mankind.

Eum. Come—let me lead you to the altar's foot:
There hear, there see—there dwells th' Eternal's eye!

Mer. Ah, what is thy design!

Eum. To die—to live——

Friends!—in this warm embrace divide my soul.

[To Narbas, who presses him tenderly.

—Weep not my Narbas:

No blush for deeds unworthy your instructions

Shall stain remembrance of the care I cost you.

Stay thou, that this good lord returning from me

May find thee, and impart a rip'ning hope

Whereon your council may direct and save.

On to the work of fate—it calls me hence——

I hear it and obey.

[Exit Eum. Mer. and Eur.

Nar. Away—I would not see thee share my sorrow.

Ism. Oh, 't were too poor a wish. Heaven knows I seek
No share—I long for power to bear it all.

Nar. Thou art too good for courts—where ruin preys
On innocence, and nought but guile is safe.
—What are thy thoughts of this lost prince's virtues?

Ism. I am unskill'd in men, and most in kings;
But sure if ever beauty dwelt in form,
Courage in gentleness, or truth in grandeur,
All those adorn'd perfections meet in him.

Nar. Yet see how Heaven, that gave him all these claims,
Forgets 'em, and resigns him—Let that teach thee
When soon, as soon they will, thy splendours fall,
Thou lovest nothing but a right to woes.

Ism. Should the queen,
Best of her sex,
Leave this loud stage of pain, and rest in death,
Oh, teach my willing feet to find some gloom
Dark as my prospects, deep enclos'd for safety,
And silent as the brow of midnight sleep!

Nar. Yes, we will go, my sweet Ismene! go
Where Sorrow's sharpest eye shall fail to find us;
Where we may mix with men who ne'er deceiv'd,
And women born to be the charms they look.
—There is a place, which my Eumenes lov'd
Till youth's fond hope of glory dash'd his peace,
Where nature, plainly noble, knows no pomp,
And virtue moves no envy. [Shouts.

—Hark! that cry
Bodes horror—'t is the signal of some fate.
—Listen: again—— [Shouts.

Ism. Again I hear and tremble.
Who knows but now the queen's too direful deed
Has ended all her mis'ries!——

Nar. No more these eyes shall find thee, fated king!
Cresphontes and his race are all no more.

Ism. [At a window.] Hence from the temple to the palace gate

The scatt'ring crowd runs wide a thousand ways,
All busy'd without view—all driv'n by terrour.

Enter EURICLES bloody.

Nar. Breathless and bleeding, see! who comes!—oh Euricles!

Eur. Scarce had I strength, wedg'd in by crossing crowds,
To stem yon breathing torrent—Give me rest.

Nar. Eumenes—does he live?

Eur. He is—the son confess'd of Grecian gods.

Nar. What, has he suffer'd?

Eur. Nothing—but has done——

Beyond example's boast—Oh! such a deed!
So terrible! so just!—so fill'd with wonders!
That half Alcides' labours scarce were more.

Nar. And shall he be a king?

Eur. He is.

Nar. And Merope,

Great mirror of affliction—lives she too?
How was it?—say—my joys will grow too strong!

Eur. The altar, strew'd with flow'rs, was ready dress'd,
The smoking incense rose in fragrant curls,
And Hymen's lambent torches flam'd serene,
Silence and expectation's dreadful stillness
Doubled the solemn horror of the scene!
—There Polyphontes stood, and at his side,
Dumb as a destin'd victim, stood the queen.
Our prince's summon'd hand had touch'd the altar,
His eye sought heaven, as if prepar'd to swear:
The tyrant smil'd—when straight the priest look'd pale,
The lights extinguish'd, and the temple's roof,

Shook by descending thunder, seem'd to bow !
 The god ! the god ! the rev'rend starter cry'd,
 Forbid these baneful nuptials—Yes, I hear him,
 The dreadful prince reply'd ; and at that word
 Leapt from the altar to the tyrant's breast,
 And plung'd the sacred axe of sacrifice,
 Snatch'd like a lightning's flash, and reach'd his life.
 —He fell—and o'er him while with pendent eye
 Th' indignant hero hung with arm new-rais'd,
 Base from behind pale Erox pierc'd his side.
 —Red in his mingled blood and rising anger
 He heard the crowd's protective cry—turn'd short,
 And bury'd in his brow the rapid steel ;
 Then to the altar's height sublimely sprung,
 Stood monarch all confess'd, and wav'd the throng !
 Come, let me guide you to this work of heaven ;
 Haste, and partake it—fly——
 Nar. Oh, happy day—— [Exeunt.

SCENE II.

The Temple of Hymen. EUMENES discovered on the altar with the Axe of Sacrifice in his hand ; MEROPE kneeling, Priests, Attendants, and Guards. Trumpets and shouts heard.

Mer. Now, now ye gods ! my pray'rs are heard.

[A loud clap of thunder.

Eum. Hark, madam, Heaven approves ! th' attentive gods
 Hear hearts, and make voice needless—“ Doubt not then
 “ They are the good mind's guardians—my deliverance
 “ Proves how they lov'd your virtue ;” in your safety
 I feel the blessing perfect—May I live
 In deeds, not words, to thank the good they gave.

Mer. Deeds, words, and thoughts, are theirs—
Heaven claims us all.

“ *Eum.* [*To the People.*] Hear me, my people! take your
king, and with him

“ Heaven’s best gift, your liberty—Haughtier monarchs

“ Place greatness in oppression; let my throne

“ Find safety but in saving—

“ Pride is too apt to harden prosp’rous power,

“ But he whose youth is chasten’d by distress

“ Makes subjects happy and himself ador’d.”

*Enter NARBAS, EURICLES, and ISMENE, all speaking
kneeling.*

Hail! and be ever bless’d, oh King! oh Queen!

Mer. Rise—and lament no more, ye happy friends

Of virtue and of heaven—see what the gods

Have done—to shame suspicion into faith!

Oh! never let the innocent despair:

The hand that made can save, and best knows when. [*To Eum.*

—Son of Alcides!—for what heart but his,

Nourish’d in misery, by wants obstructed,

Ere sprung like thine at youth’s first shoot to glory,

Trod on a tyrant and redeem’d a people?

Eum. ’Tis but the low, the last, the lightest duty

Of a king’s hand to dare: ’tis his to save;

To think, to hear, to labour, to discern,

To form, to remedy—to be but one,

Yet act, and love, and fear, and feel—for all.

—Oh, Madam! I am your’s ’midst all these claims:

Be those my glory’s, this my duty’s care,

To add my royal father’s love to mine,

And with a doubled rev’rence seek your comfort.

—Narbass! what power can language lend my love

To paint the joy thy sense of pleasure gives me,
Thou source, and soul, and author of my virtues?
Suspend we thoughts thus tender—Let us now
Summon Mycene's chiefs, and calm her people. [To Mer.
Come, madam! he who reigns but climbs to care,
Though safe his throne, he finds no softness there;
Dangers, and doubts, and toils, each moment seize,
Hang on his bus'ness and perplex his ease:
Bright but by pomp of woe kings shine in vain,
Envy'd for anguish and adorn'd for pain. [Exeunt.



EPILOGUE.

*I'M glad with all my heart I've scap'd my wedding—
Glad! cry the maids—Heaven keep such joy from spreading!
Marriage (poor things) don't move their hearts so coldly,
'Tis a dark leap they own—But Love jumps boldly—
Fair fall th' advent'urers; I'm no husband hater,
Only be warn'd by me, and wed no traitor:
Pain-bunting murm'rer! born to growl and grumble
No king can please him—and no wife can humble;
Sick to the soul, be heaven his kind physician!
Earth's ablest drugs are lost upon ambition:
All Warwick-lane falls short—and to my knowledge
No cure is hop'd for in our female college.*

*Shun plotting beads, dear ladies!—all miscarries
When one who hums and haws at midnight marries.
Better plain downright dunce—no dream pursuing,
One that means bluntly—and knows what he's doing;
Not him whose factious mind outsoaring pleasure
Is still most busy when his wife's at leisure.*

*Better a sportsman, sound of wind and hearty—
Better Sir Sot—than spouse dry drunk with party:
A hunting husband hallows—and you hear him—
A drunken deary staggers—and you steer him—
Each conscious of his wife takes care to make her
One way or other—an indulg'd partaker.*

*But your sage, saturnine, ambitious lover,
Keeps no one secret woman wou'd discover:*

*Stranger at home, he strolls abroad for blessing,
And holds what'er he has not worth possessing :
Freedom, and mirth, and health, and joy—despises,
And scorns all rest—he so profoundly wise is !
At length, thank heaven ; he dies ; kind vapours strike him,
And leaves behind—ten thousand madmen like him.*

7 JUL 52

THE END.

7 JUL 52

Act 10.

MAHOMET.

Scene 1.



De Wilde pinet

Kenney sculp

MISS WALLIS as PALMIRA.

Pal. Tremble Laphana !

London Printed for J Bell British Library Strand July 14 1795



Orag del.

Neagle sculp.

London Printed for J. Bell. British Library Strand June 18 1795.

7 JU 52

MAHOMET.

A
TRAGEDY,

BY THE REV. MR. MILLER.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS PERFORMED AT
THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON:

Printed for the Proprietors, under the Direction of JOHN BELL,
British Library, STRAND,
Bookseller to His Royal Highness the PRINCE OF WALES.

-MDCCLXVI

1795



TO THE RIGHT HON.
EDWARD SOUTHWELL.

SIR,

IT was the design of my deceased husband to have presented this Piece to you. As it was always my duty and inclination to obey his commands whilst living, so I still find a secret satisfaction (though after his death) in performing what he intended.

That he might not put a trifle into your hands, he waited for the opinion of the Town, and now that has been favourable, it has fallen to my disconsolate office to make the melancholy offering.

In my unfortunate circumstances, it cannot be expected (though I were capable) that I should speak either to the merits of the Piece or of the Patron; the former may possibly want a recommendation to the world, but I have often heard my husband say the latter did not.

What I have more to add is, that you would be pleased to receive this as the last testimony of his esteem and gratitude from the hands of his

Disconsolate wife,

DOROTHY MILLER.

PROLOGUE.

*To point what lengths credulity has run,
What counsels shaken, and what states undone,
What hellish fury wings th' enthusiast's rage,
And makes the troubled earth one tragic stage ;
What blasphemies imposture dare advance,
And build what terrors on weak ignorance ;
How fraud alone rage to religion binds,
And makes a Pandemonium of our minds :
Our Gallic bard, fir'd with these glorious views,
First to his Crusade led the Tragic Muse,
Her pow'r through France his charming numbers bore,
But France was deaf—for all her priests were sore.*

*On English ground she makes a firmer stand,
And hopes to suffer by no hostile hand :
No clergy here usurp the free-born mind,
Ordain'd to teach, and not enslave mankind ;
Religion here bids persecution cease,
Without all order, and within all peace ;
Truth guards her happy pale with watchful care,
And frauds, though pious, find no entrance here.*

*Religion, to be sacred, must be free ;
Men will suspect—where bigots keep the key :
Hooded and train'd like hawks th' enthusiasts fly,
And the priests' victims in their pounces die :
Like whelps born blind, by mother-church they're bred,
Nor wake to sight to know themselves misled ;
Murder's the game—and, to the sport unprest,
Proud of the sin, and in the duty blest,
The layman's but the bloodhound of the priest.*

*Whoe'er thou art that dar'st such themes advance,
To priest-rid Spain repair, or slavish France,
For Juda's hire there do the devil's task,
And trick up slav'ry in religion's mask;
England still free no surer means requires
To sink their sottish souls and damp their martial fires.*

*Britons! these numbers to yourselves you owe;
Voltaire hath strength to shoot in Shakspeare's bow;
Fame led him at his Hyppocrene to drink,
And taught to write with Nature as to think:
With English freedom, English wit he knew,
And from the inexhausted stream profusely drew:
Cherish the noble bard yourselves have made,
Nor let the frauds of France steal all our trade.
Now of each prize the winner has the wearing,
E'en send our English stage a privateering;
With your commission we'll our sails unfold,
And from their loads of dross import some gold.*

Dramatis Personae.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

MAHOMET,	-	-	-	Mr. Aickin.
MIRVAN,	-	-	-	Mr. Fearon.
ALI,	-	-	-	Mr. Gardner.
HERCIDES,	-	-	-	Mr. Macready.
AMMON,	-	-	-	Mr. Thompson.
ZAPHNA,	-	-	-	Mr. Holman.
ALCANOR,	-	-	-	Mr. Wroughton.
PHARON,	-	-	-	Mr. Hull.

Women.

PALMIRA,	-	-	-	Mrs. Merry.
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MAHOMET.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*An Apartment in the Temple of Mecca. Enter ALCANOR
and PHARON.*

Alcanor.

PHARON, no more—shall I
Fall prostrate to an arrogant impostor?
Homage in Mecca once I banish'd thence,
And incense, the delusions of a rebel!
No—blast Alcanor, righteous Heaven! if e'er
This hand, yet free and uncontaminate,
Shall league with fraud, or adulate a tyrant.

Pha. August and sacred chief of Ishmael's senate,
This zeal of thine, paternal as it is,
Is fatal now—our impotent resistance
Controls not Mahomet's unbounded progress,
But without weak'ning irritates the tyrant.
When once a citizen you well condemn'd him
As an obscure seditious innovator;
But now he is a conq'ror, prince, and pontiff,
Whilst nations numberless embrace his laws,
And pay him adoration—even in Mecca
He boasts his proselytes.

Alca. Such proselytes

Are worthy of him—low untutor'd reptiles,
In whom sense only lives—most credulous still
Of what is most incredible.

Pha. Be such

Disdain'd, my lord ; but may n't the pest spread upwards
And seize the head—Say, is the senate sound ?
I fear some members of that rev'rend class
Are marked with the contagion, who, from views
Of higher power and rank,
Worship this rising sun, and give a sanction
To his invasions.

Alca. If, ye powers divine !

Ye mark the movements of this nether world,
And bring them to account, crush, crush those vipers,
Who, singled out by a community
To guard their rights, shall, for a grasp of ore
Or paltry office, sell 'em to the foe !

Pha. Each honest citizen, I grant, is thine,
And grateful for thy boundless blessings on them,
Would serve thee with their lives ; but the approach
Of this usurper to their very walls
Strikes them with such a dread, that even these
Implore thee to accept his proffer'd peace.

Alca. Oh, people lost to wisdom as to glory !
Go, bring in pomp, and serve upon your knees
This idol, that will crush you with its weight.
Mark, I abjure him : by his savage hand
My wife and children perish'd, whilst in vengeance
I carry'd carnage to his very tent,
Transfix'd to earth his only son, and wore
His trappings as a trophy of my conquest.
This torch of enmity thus lighted 'twixt us
The hand of time itself can ne'er extinguish.

Pha. Extinguish not, but smother for a while
Its fatal flame, and greatly sacrifice
Thy private sufferings to the public welfare.
Oh say, Alcanor, wert thou to behold
(As soon thou may'st) this fam'd metropolis
With foes begirt, behold its pining tenants
Prey on each other for the means of life,
Whilst lakes of blood and mountains of the slain
Putrify the air,
And sweep off thousands with their pois'nous steams;
Would thy slain children be aveng'd by this?

Alca. No, Pharon, no; I live not for myself:
My wife and children lost, my country's now
My family.

Pha. Then let not that be lost.

Alca. 'Tis lost by cowardice.

Pha. By rashness often.

Alca. Pharon, desist.

Pha. My noble lord, I cannot,
Must not desist, will not, since you're possess'd
Of means to bring this insolent invader
To any terms you'll claim.

Alca. What means?

Pha. Palmira,

That blooming fair, the flower of all his camp,
By thee borne off in our last skirmish with him,
Seems the divine ambassadress of peace,
Sent to procure our safety. Mahomet
Has by his heralds thrice propos'd her ransom,
And bade us fix the price.

Alca. I know it, Pharon:
And would'st thou then restore this noble treasure
To that Barbarian? "Wouldst thou for the frauds,

"The deaths, the devastations, he brings on us
"Enrich his ruffian hands with such a gem,"
And render beauty the reward of rapine?—
Nay, smile not, friend, nor think that at these years,
Well travell'd in the winter of my days,
I entertain a thought tow'rd this young beauty
But what's as pure as is the western gale
That breathes upon the uncropt violet.

Pba. My lord—

Alca. This heart, by age and grief congeal'd,
Is no more sensible to love's endearments
Than are our barren rocks to morn's sweet dew
That balmy trickles down their rugged cheeks.

Pba. My noble chief, each master-piece of nature
Commands involuntary homage from us.

Alca. I own a tenderness unfelt before,
A sympathetic grief with ardent wishes
To make her happy fill'd my widow'd bosom :
I dread her being in that monster's power,
And burn to have her hate him like myself.
'Twas on this hour, I at her modest suit,
Promis'd her audience in my own pavilion.
Pharon, go thou mean-while and see the senate
Assembled straight—I'll sound 'em as I ought.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.

Changes to a Room of State. Enter PALMIRA,

Pal. What means this boding terror that usurps,
In spite o' me, dominion o'er my heart,
"Converting the sweet flower of new-blown hope

“ To deadly nightshade, pois’ning to my soul
 “ The fountain of its bliss?”—Oh, holy prophet!
 Shall I ne’er more attend thy sacred lessons?
 Oh, Zaphna! much-lov’d youth! I feel for thee
 As for myself—But hold, my final audit
 Is now at hand—I tremble for th’ event!
 Here comes my judge—Now, liberty or bondage?

Enter ALCANOR.

Alca. Palmira, whence those tears? trust me, fair maid!
 Thou art not fallen into barbarians’ hands;
 What Mecca can afford of pomp or pleasure,
 To call Attention from Misfortune’s lap,
 Demand and share it.

Pal. No, my generous victor!
 My suit’s for nothing Mecca can afford;
 Pris’ner these two long months beneath your roof
 I’ve tasted such benignity and candor,
 Whilst your own hands so labour’d to beguile
 The anxious moments of captivity,
 That oft I’ve call’d my tears ingratitude.

Alca. If ought remains that’s in my power to smooth
 The rigour of your fate, and crown your wishes,
 Why, ’twould fill
 The furrows in my cheeks, and make old age
 Put on its summer’s garb.

Pal. Thus low I bless thee. [*Kissling.*]
 It is on you, on you alone, Alcanor,
 My whole of future happiness depends;
 Have pity then;
 Pity, Alcanor, one who’s torn from all
 That’s dear or venerable to her soul;

Restore me then, restore me to my country,
Restore me to my father, prince, and prophet.

Alca. Is slav'ry dear then? is fraud venerable?
What country? a tumultuous wand'ring camp!

Pal. My country, sir, is not a single spot
Of such a mould, or fix'd to such a clime;
No, 't is the social circle of my friends,
The lov'd community in which I'm link'd,
And in whose welfare all my wishes centre.

Alca. Excellent maid! then Mecca be thy country.
Robb'd of my children, would Palmira deign
To let me call her child, the toil I took
To make her destiny propitious to her
Would lighten the rough burthen of my own:
But no; you scorn my country and my laws.

Pal. Can I be yours when not my own? Your bounties
Claim and share my gratitude—But Mahomet
Claims right o'er me of parent, prince, and prophet.

Alca. Of parent, prince, and prophet! Heavens! that robber,
Who, a scap'd felon, emulates a throne,
And scoffer at all faiths proclaims a new one!

Pal. Oh, cease, my lord; this blasphemous abuse
Of one whom millions with myself adore
Does violence to my ear; such black profaneness
'Gainst Heaven's interpreter blots out remembrance
Of favours past, and nought succeeds but horror.

Alca. Oh, superstition! thy pernicious rigours,
Inflexible to reason, truth, and nature,
Banish humanity the gentlest breasts.
Palmira, I lament to see thee plung'd
So deep in error——

Pal. Do you then reject
My just petition? can Alcanor's goodness

Be deaf to suff'ring virtue?
 Name but the ransom,
 And Mahomet will treble what you ask.

Alca. There is no ransom Mahomet can offer
 Proportion'd to the prize. Trust me, Palmira,
 I cannot yield thee up. What! to a tyrant
 Who wrongs thy youth, and mocks thy tender heart
 With vile illusions and fanatic terrors!

Enter PHARON.

What wouldst thou, Pharon?

Pba. From yon' western gate,
 Which opens on Moradia's fertile plains,
 Mahomet's general, Mirvan, hastes to greet thee.

Alca. Mirvan, that vile apostate!

Pba. In one hand
 He holds a scimitar, the other bears
 An olive branch, which to our chiefs he waves,
 An emblem of his suit—a martial youth,
 Zaphna by name, attends him for our hostage.

Pal. [*Apart.*] Zaphna! mysterious Heaven!

Pba. Mirvan advances
 This way, my lord, to render you his charge.

Alca. "Mirvan, advance! how dare the traitor see me?"
 Palmira, thou retire—Pharon, be presents [*Exit Pal.*]

Enter MIRVAN.

After six years of infamous rebellion
 Against thy native country, dost thou, Mirvan,
 Again profane with thy detested presence
 These sacred walls which once thy hands defended,
 But thy bad heart has vilely since betray'd?
 Thou poor deserter of thy country's gods,

Thou base invader of thy country's rights,
What wouldst thou have with me?

Mir. I'd pardon thee——

Out of compassion to thy age and sufferings,
And high regard for thy experienc'd valour.
Heaven's great apostle offers thee in friendship
A hand could crush thee, and I come, commission'd
To name the terms of peace he deigns to tender.

Alca. He deigns to tender! insolent impostor!
Dost thou not, Mirvan, blush
To serve this wretch—this base of soul as birth?

Mir. Mahomet's grandeur's in himself; he shines not
With borrowed lustre.

Plunged in the night of prejudice, and bound
In fetters of hereditary faith,
My judgment slept: but when I found him born
To mould anew the prostrate universe,
I started from my dream, join'd his career,
And shar'd his arduous and immortal labours.
Once, I must own, I was as blind as thou;
Then wake to glory, and be chang'd like me.

Alca. What death to honour wak'ning to such glory!

Pba. Oh, what a fall from virtue was that change!

Mir. Come, embrace our faith, reign with Mahomet,
And, cloth'd in terrors, make the vulgar tremble.

Alca. 'Tis Mahomet, and tyrants like to Mahomet,
'Tis Mirvan, and apostates like to Mirvan,
I only would make tremble——Is it, say'st thou
Religion that's the parent of this rapine,
This virulence and rage?—No; true religion
Is always mild, propitious, and humane,
Plays not the tyrant, plants no faith in blood,
Nor bears destruction on her chariot wheels,

But stoops to polish, succour, and redress,
And builds her grandeur on the public good.

Mir. Thou art turn'd Christian sure! some straggling monk
Has taught thee these tame lessons——

Alca. If the Christians
Hold principles like these, which reason dictates,
“ Which all our notions of the Powers divine
“ Declare the social laws they meant for man,
“ And all the beauties and delights of nature
“ Bear witness to,” the Christians may be right;
Thy sect cannot, who, nurs'd in blood and slaughter,
Worship a cruel and revengeful being,
And draw him always with his thunder round him
As ripe for the destruction of mankind.

Mir. If clemency delights thee learn it here.
Though banish'd by thy voice his native city,
Though by thy hand robb'd of his only son,
Mahomet pardons thee; nay farther, begs
The hatred burning 'twixt you be extinguish'd
With reconciliation's gen'rous tear.

Alca. I know thy master's arts; his gen'rous tears,
Like the refreshing drops that previous fall
To the wild outrage of o'erwhelming earthquakes
Only forerun destruction;
Courage he has, not bravery,
For blood and havoc are the sure attendants
On his victorious car.

Pba. Leagues he will make too——

Alca. Like other grasping tyrants, till he eyes
A lucky juncture to enlarge his bounds,
Then he'll deride 'em, leap o'er ev'ry tie
Of sacred guarantee or sworn protection,
And when th' oppress'd ally implores assistance

Beneath that mask invade the wish'd-for realms,
And from pure friendship take them to himself.

Mir. Mahomet fights Heaven's battles, bends the bow
To spread Heaven's laws, and to subject to faith
The iron neck of error.

Alca. Lust and ambition, Mirvan, are the springs
Of all his actions, whilst without one virtue
Dissimulation, like a flatt'ring painter,
Bedecks him with the colouring of them all :
'This is thy master's portrait——But no more——
My soul's inexorable, and my hate
Immortal as the cause from whence it sprang.

Mir. What cause?——

Alca. The difference between good and evil.

Mir. Thou talk'st to me, Alcanor, with an air
Of a stern judge, that from his dread tribunal
Intimidates the criminal beneath him :
Resume thy temper, act the minister,
And treat with me as with th' ambassador
Of Heaven's apostle, and Arabia's king.

Alca. Arabia's king ! what king ! who crown'd him ?

Mir. Conquest——

Whilst to the stile of conqueror and of monarch
Patron of peace he'd add—Name then the price
Of peace and of Palmira—Boundless treasures,
The spoils of vanquish'd monarchs, and the stores
Of rifled provinces are thrown before thee.
Our troops, with matchless ardour hasten hither
To lay in ruin this rebellious city ;
Stem then the rushing torrent : Mahomet
In person comes to claim a conference with thee
For this good purpose.

Alca. Who ! Mahomet !

Mir. Yes, he conjures thou'lt grant it.

Alca. Traitor! 'were I sole ruler here in Mecca
I'd answer thee with chastisement.

Mir. Hot man!

I pity thy false virtue—But farewell——

And since the senate share thy power in Mecca

To their serener wisdoms I'll appeal. [Exit.

Alca. I'll meet thee there, and see whose voice is victor.

Come, Pharon, aid me to repulse this traitor;

To bear him with impunity amongst us

Is treason 'gainst ourselves—Ye sacred powers,

My country's gods, that for three thousand years

Have reign'd protectors of the tribe of Ishmael,

Oh! support my spirit

In that firm purpose it has always held,

To combat violence, fraud, and usurpation,

To pluck the spoil from the oppressor's jaws,

And keep my country, as I found it, free. [Exit.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Palmira's Apartment. Enter PALMIRA.

Palmira.

CEASE, cease ye streaming instruments of woe

From your ignoble toil—Take warmth, my heart!

Collect thy scatter'd powers, and brave misfortune.

In vain the storm-tost mariner repines;

Were he within to raise as great a tempest

As beats him from without, it would not smooth

One boist'rous surge: impatience only throws

Discredit on mischance, and adds a shame
To our affliction.

Enter ZAPHNA.

Ha! all-gracious Heaven!
Thou, Zaphna! is it thou? what pitying angel
Guided thy steps to these abodes of bondage?

Zaph. Thou sov'reign of my soul and all its powers,
Object of ev'ry fear and ev'ry wish,
Friend, sister, love, companion, all that's dear!
Do I once more behold thee, my Palmira?
Oh! I will set it down the whitest hour
That Zaphna e'er was blest with!

Pal. Say, my hero——
Are my ills ended then?—They are, they are;
Now Zaphna's here I am no more a captive
Except to him:—oh, blest captivity!

Zaph. Those smiles are dearer to my raptur'd breast,
Sweeter those accents to my listening heart,
Than all Arabia's spices to the sense.

Pal. No wonder that my soul was so elate,
No wonder that the cloud of grief gave way,
When thou, my son of comfort, were so nigh.

Zaph. Since that dire hour, when on Sabaria's strand
The barb'rous foe depriv'd me of Palmira,
In what a gulph of horror and despair
Have thy imagined perils plunged my soul!
Stretch'd on expiring corse for a while,
To the deaf stream I pour'd out my complaint,
And begg'd I might be number'd with the dead
That strewed its banks—then, starting from despair,
With rage I flew to Mahomet for vengeance;
He, for some high mysterious purpose known

To Heaven and him alone, at length dispatch'd
The valiant Mirvan to demand a truce :
Instant on wings of lightning I pursued him,
And enter'd as his hostage—fix'd, Palmira,
Or to redeem or die a captive with thee.

Pal. Heroic youth!

Zaph. But how have these barbarians
Treated my fair?

Pal. With high humanity.
I in my victor found a friend—Alcanor
Has made me feel captivity in nothing
But absence from my Zaphna and my friends.

Zaph. I grieve a soul so generous in our foe :
But now presented as a hostage to him,
His noble bearing and humanity
Made captive of my heart; I felt, methought,
A new affection lighted in my breast,
And wonder'd whence the infant ardour sprang.

Pal. Yet, gen'rous as he is, not all my prayers,
Not all the tears I lavish at his feet,
Can move him to restore me—

Zaph. But he shall—
Let the Barbarian know he shall, Palmira ;
The god of Mahomet; our divine protector,
Whose still triumphant standard I have borne
O'er piles of vanquish'd infidels—that power
Which brought unnumber'd battlements to earth,
Will humble Mecca too.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, noble Mirvan,
Do my Palmira's chains sit loose upon her ;
Say, is it freedom? This presumptuous senate—

Mir. Has granted all we ask'd, all we could wish—
The truce obtain'd, the gates to Mahomet
Flew open——

Zaph. Mahomet in Mecca say'st thou?
Once more in Mecca!

Pal. Transport! bid him welcome.

Zaph. Thy suff'rings then are o'er, the ebb is past,
And a full tide of hope flows in upon us.

Mir. The spirit of our prophet that inspired me
Breath'd such divine persuasion from my lips
As shook the reverend fathers—Sirs, cry'd I,
This fav'rite of high Heaven, who rules in battle,
Before whose footstool tributary kings
Bow the anointed head, born here in Mecca,
Asks but to be enroll'd a senator,
And you refuse his prayer. Deluded sages!
Although your cong'ror he requests no more,
Than one day's truce, pure pity to yourselves!
To save you if he can, and you—Oh, shame!——
At this a gen'ral murmur spread around,
Which seem'd propitious to us——

Zaph. Greatly carry'd!
Go on——

Mir. Then straight th' inflexible Alcanor
Flew through the streets, assembling all the people
To bar our prophet. Thither too I fled,
Urg'd the same arguments, exhorted, threaten'd,
Till they unhing'd the gates, and gave free passage
To Mahomet and his chiefs—In vain Alcanor
And his dishearten'd party, strove t' oppose him;
Serene and dauntless through the gazing crowd,
With more than human majesty he mov'd,
Bearing the peaceful olive, whilst the truce
Was instantly proclaim'd——

Pal. But where's the prophet?

Mir. Reclin'd in yonder grot that joins the temple,
Attended by his chiefs.

Zaph. There let us haste
With duteous step, and bow ourselves before him. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

*Changes to a spacious Grotto. MAHOMET discovered with the
Alcoran before him.*

Mab. Glorious hypocrisy! what fools are they
Who fraught with lustful or ambitious views
Wear not thy specious mask. Thou, Alcoran!
Hast won more battles, ta'en more cities for me,
Than thrice my feeble numbers had achieved
Without the succour of thy sacred impulse.

Enter HERCIDES, AMMON, and ALI.

Invincible supporters of our grandeur!
My faithful chiefs, Hercides, Ammon, Ali!
Go and instruct this people in my name,
That faith may dawn, and like a morning-star
Be herald to my rising:
Lead them to know and to adore my god;
But above all, to fear him—Lo, Palmira! [*Ex. Her. &c.*]
Her angel-face, with unfeign'd blushes spread,
Proclaims the purity that dwells within.

Enter MIRVAN, ZAPHNA, and PALMIRA.

[*To Palmira.*] The hand of war was ne'er before so barbarous,

Never bore from me half so rich a spoil
As thee, my fair.

Pal. Joy to my heavenly guardian!
Joy to the world that Mahomet's in Mecca!

Mab. My child, let me embrace thee—How's this,
Zaphna!

Thou here!

Zaph. [*Kneeling.*] My father, chief, and holy pontiff!
The god that thou 'rt inspir'd by march'd before me.
Ready for thee to wade through seas of danger,
Or cope with death itself, I hither hasten'd
To yield myself an hostage, and with zeal
Prevent thy order.

Mab. 'T was not well, rash boy:
He that does more than I command him, errs
As much as he who falters in his duty,
And is not for my purpose—I obey
My god—implicitly obey thou me.

Pal. Pardon, my gracious lord, his well-meant ardour.
Brought up from tender infancy beneath
The shelter of thy sacred patronage,
Zaphna and I've been animated still
By the same sentiments: alas, great prophet!
I've had enough of wretchedness—to languish
A prisoner here, far both from him and you;
Grudge me not then the ray of consolation
His presence beam'd, nor cloud my dawning hope
Of rising freedom and felicity.

Mab. Palmira, 't is enough; I read thy heart—
Be not alarm'd; though burden'd with the cares
Of thrones and altars, still my guardian eye
Will watch o'er thee as o'er the universe.
Follow my generals, Zaphna. Fair Palmira,

Retire and pay your powerful vows to Heaven,
And dread no wrongs but from Alcanor.

[Zaphna and Palmira go out separately.]

Mirvan—

Attend thou here—'Tis time, my trusty soldier,
My long-try'd friend, to lay unfolded to thee
The close resolves and councils of my heart.
The tedious length of a precarious siege
May damp the present ardour of my troops,
And check me in the height of my career.
Let us not give deluded mortals leisure
By reason to disperse the mystic gloom
We've cast about us—Prepossession, friend,
Reigns monarch of the million—Mecca's crowd
Gaze at my rapid victories, and think
Some awful power directs my arm to conquest;
But whilst our friends once more renew their efforts
To win the wav'ring people to our interest,
What think'st thou, say, of Zaphna and Palmira?

Mir. As of thy most resign'd and faithful vassals.

Mab. Oh, Mirvan! they're the deadliest of my foes.

Mir. How!

Mab. Yes, they love each other—

Mir. Well—what crime?—

Mab. What crime! dost say?—Learn all my frailty then—
My life's a combat: keen austerity
Subjects my nature to abstemious bearings;
I've banish'd from my lips that trait'rous liquor,
That either works to practices of outrage
Or melts the manly breast to woman's weakness;
Or on the burning sands or desert rocks
With thee I bear th' inclemency of climates,
Freeze at the pole, or scorch beneath the line.

For all these toils love only can retaliate,
The only consolation or reward.
Fruit of my labours, idol of my incense,
And sole divinity that I adore;
Know then that I prefer this young Palmira
To all the ripen'd beauties that attend me,
Dwell on her accents, dote upon her smiles,
And am not mine but her's. Now judge, my friend,
How vast the jealous transports of thy master,
When at his feet he daily hears this charmer
Avow a foreign love, and, insolent,
Give Mahomet a rival!

Mir. How! and Mahomet
Not instantly revenge——

Mab. Ah! should he not?
But better to detest him know him better:
Learn then, that both my rival and my love
Sprang from the loins of this audacious tyrant.

Mir. Alcanor!

Mab. Is their father: old Hercides,
To whose sage institution I commit
My captive infants, late reveal'd it to me——
Perdition! I myself light up their flame,
And fed it till I set myself on fire.
Well, means must be employed: but see, the father;
He comes this way, and launches from his eye
Malignant sparks of enmity and rage.
Mirvan, see all ta'en care of; let Hercides
With his escort beset yon gate; bid Ali
Make proper disposition round the temple;
This done, return and render me account
Of what success we meet with 'mongst the people:
Then, Mirvan, we'll determine or to loose
Or bridle in our vengeance as it suits.

[*Exit Mir.*

Enter ALCANOR.

Mab. Why dost thou start, Alcanor? whence that horror!
Is then my sight so baneful to thee?

Alca. "Heavens!"

Must I then bear this? must I meet in Mecca,
On terms of peace, this spoiler of the earth?

Mab. Approach, old man, without a blush, since Heaven
For some high end decrees our future union.

Alca. I blush not for myself, but thee, thou tyrant;
For thee, bad man! who com'st with serpent guile
To sow dissention in the realms of peace:
Thy very name sets families at variance,
'Twixt son and father bursts the bonds of nature,
And scars endearment from the nuptial pillow;
"Ev'n truce with thee is a new stratagem."
And is it, insolent dissembler! thus
Thou com'st to give the sons of Mecca peace,
And me an unknown god?

Mab. Were I to answer any but Alcanor,
That unknown god should speak in thunder for me,
But here with thee I'd parley as a man.

Alca. What canst thou say, what urge in thy defence?
What right hast thou received to plant new faiths,
Or lay a claim to royalty and priesthood?

Mab. The right that a resolv'd and tow'ring spirit
Has o'er the grov'ling instinct of the vulgar——

Alca. Patience, good Heavens! have I not known thee,
Mahomet,
When void of wealth, inheritance, or fame,
Rank'd with the lowest of the low at Mecca?

Mab. Dost thou not know, thou haughty feeble man,
That the low insect, lurking in the grass,

And the imperial eagle, which aloft
Ploughs the ethereal plain, are both alike
In the Eternal Eye—Mortals are equal :
It is not birth, magnificence, or power,
But virtue only makes the difference 'twixt them.

Alca. [*Apart.*] What sacred truth from what polluted lips !

Mab. By virtue's ardent pinions borne on high
Heaven met my zeal, gave me in solemn charge
Its sacred laws, then bade me on and publish.

Alca. And did Heaven bid thee on and plunder too ?

Mab. My law is active, and inflames the soul
With thirst of glory. What can thy dumb gods ?
What laurels spring beneath their sooty altars ?
Thy slothful sect disgrace the human kind,
Enervate lifeless images of men !

Mine bear the intrepid soul ; my faith makes heroes.

Alca. Go preach these doctrines at Medina, where
By prostrate wretches thou art rais'd to homage.

Mab. Hear me ; thy Mecca trembles at my name ;
If therefore thou wouldst save thyself or city,
Embrace my proffer'd friendship—What to-day
I thus solicit I'll command to-morrow.

Alca. Contract with thee a friendship ! frontless man !
Know'st thou a god can work that miracle ?

Mab. I do—Necessity—thy interest.

Alca. Interest is thy god, Equity is mine.
Propose the tie of this unnatural union ;
Say, is't the loss of thy ill-fated son,
Who in the field fell victim to my rage,
Or the dear blood of my poor captive children,
Shed by thy butchering hands ?

Mab. Ay, 'tis thy children.

Mark me then well, and learn th' important secret
Which I'm sole master of—Thy children live.

Alca. Live!

Mab. Yes——both live——

Alca. What say'st thou? Both!

Mab. Ay, both.

Alca. And dost thou not beguile me?

Mab. No, old man.

Alca. Propitious Heav'ns! Say, Mahomet, for now
Methinks I could hold endless converse with thee,
Say what's their portion, liberty or bondage?

Mab. Bred in my camp, and tutor'd in my law,
I hold the balance of their destinies,
And now 'tis on the turn——their lives or deaths——
'Tis thine to say which shall preponderate.

Alca. Mine! can I save them? name the mighty ransom—
If I must bear their chains double the weight,
And I will kiss the hand that puts them on;
Or if my streaming blood must be the purchase,
Drain ev'ry sluice and channel of my body,
My swelling veins will burst to give it passage.

Mab. I'll tell thee then—renounce thy Pagan faith,
Abolish thy vain gods, and——

Alca. Ha!

Mab. Nay, more,
Surrender Mecca to me, quit this temple,
Assist me to impose upon the world,
Thunder my Koran to the gazing crowd,
Proclaim me for their prophet and their king,
And be a glorious pattern of credulity
To Korah's stubborn tribe. These terms perform'd
Thy son shall be restor'd, and Mahomet's self
Will deign to wed thy daughter.

Alca. Hear me, Mahomet——

I am a father, and this bosom boasts

A heart as tender as e'er parent bore.
 After a fifteen years of anguish for them,
 Once more to view my children, clasp them to me,
 And die in their embraces—melting thought!
 But were I doom'd or to enslave my country,
 And help to spread black error o'er the earth,
 Or to behold these blood-embrued hands,
 Deprive me of them both—Know me then, Mahomet,
 I'd not admit a doubt to cloud my choice——

[Looking earnestly at Mahomet for some time before he speaks.]

Farewell.

[Exit Alcanor.]

Mab. Why, fare thee well then, churlish dotard!
 Inexorable fool! Now by my arms
 I will have great revenge: I'll meet thy scorn
 With treble retribution.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, my Mirvan,
 What say'st thou to it now?

Mer. Why, that Alcanor
 Or we must fall.

Mab. Fall then the obdurate rebel!

Mer. The truce expires to-morrow, when Alcanor
 Again is Mecca's master, and has vow'd
 Destruction on thy head: the senate too
 Have pass'd thy doom.

Mab. Those heart-chill'd paltry babblers,
 Plac'd on the bench of sloth, with ease can nod
 And vote a man to death; why don't the cowards
 Stand me in yonder plain? With half their numbers
 I drove them headlong to their walls for shelter,
 And he was deem'd the wisest senator
 That enter'd first the gate; but now they think

They've got me in the toil their spirits mount,
And they could prove most valorous assassins——
Well, this I like—I always ow'd my greatness
To opposition ; had I not met with struggles,
I'd been obscure—Enough—Perish Alcanor !
He marbled up the pliant populace,
Those dupes of novelty will bend before us
Like osiers to a hurricane——

Mir. No time
Is to be lost.

Mab. But for a proper arm ;
For, however irksome, we must save
Appearances, and mask it with the vulgar.

Mir. True, my sage chief—What think'st thou then of
Zaphna ?

Mab. Of Zaphna, say'st thou !

Mir. Yes, Alcanor's hostage——
He can in private do thee vengeance on him :
Thy other fav'rites of maturer age,
And more discreetly zealous, would not risk it :
Youth is the stock whence grafted superstition
Shoots with unbounded vigour. He's a slave
To thy despotic faith, and urg'd by thee,
However mild his nature may appear,
Howe'er humane and noble is his spirit,
Or strong his reason, where allow'd to reason,
He would for Heaven's sake martyr half mankind.

Mab. The brother of Palmira !

Mir. Yes, that brother,
The only son of thy outrageous foe,
And the incestuous rival of thy love.

Mab. I hate the stripling, loathe his very name ;
The manes of my son too cries for vengeance
On the curs'd sire ; but then thou know'st my love,

Know'st from whose blood she sprang; this staggers, Mirvan,
 And yet I'm here surrounded with a gulf
 Ready to swallow me; come too in quest
 Of altars and a throne—What must be done?
 My warring passions, like contending clouds
 When fraught with thunder's fatal fuel, burst
 Upon themselves, and rend me with the shock.
 And shall enervating contagious love
 Hag my aspiring spirit, sink me down
 To woman's shackles, make a lapthing of me?
 Glory! that must not be! ambition still
 And great revenge impetuous urge their claims,
 And must be notic'd. Mirvan, sound this youth:
 Touch not at once upon the startling purpose,
 But make due preparation.

Mir. I'll attack him.

With all the forces of enthusiasm;
 There lies our strength.

Mab. First then, a solemn vow
 To act whatever Heaven by me enjoins him;
 Next omens, dreams, and visions, may be pleaded;
 Hints too of black designs by this Alcanor
 Upon Palmira's virtue and his life——
 But to the proof—Be now propitious, Fortune,
 Then love, ambition, vengeance, jointly triumph. [Ext.]

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Grand Apartment. Enter ZAPHNA and PALMIRA.

Zaphna.

ALCANOR claim a private conference with us!
 What has he to unfold?

Pal. I tremble, Zaphna.

Zaph. Time press'd too, did he say?

Pal. He did; then cast

A look so piercing on me it o'erwhelm'd
My face with deep confusion; this he mark'd,
Then starting left me.

Zaph. [*Aside.*] Ha! this gives me fear
That Mirvan's jealousies are too well ground'd;
But I must not distract her tender bosom
With visionary terrors. [*To Pal.*] Both in private!

Pal. In private both.

Zaph. Her virtue and my life! [*Apart.*]
It cannot be; so reverend a form
Could ne'er be pander to such black devices.

Pal. But let us shun it, Zaphna; much I fear
Alcanor has deceiv'd us: dread the treachery
Of this blood-thirsty senate. Trust me, Zaphna,
They've sworn the extirpation of our faith,
Nor care by what vile means——

Zaph. My soul's best treasure,
For whose security my ev'ry thought
Is up in arms, regardless of my own;
Shun thou Alcanor's presence! This hour, Palmira,
Mirvan, by order of our royal pontiff,
Prepares to solemaize some act of worship
Of a more hallow'd and mysterious kind
Than will admit of vulgar eye; myself
Alone am honour'd to assist.

Pal. Alone!

Zaph. Yes, to devote myself by solemn vow
For some great act, of which my fair's the prize.

Pal. What act?

Zaph. No matter, since my lov'd Palmira
Shall be the glorious recompense——

Pal. Oh, Zaphna !

Methinks I do not like this secret vow.

Why must I not be present ! were I with thee,

I should not be so anxious ;

For trust me, Zaphna, my affection for thee

Is of that pure disinterested nature,

So free from passion's taint, I've no one wish

To have thee more than thus, have thee my friend,

Share thy lov'd converse, wait upon thy welfare,

And view thee with a sister's spotless eye.

Zaph. Angelic excellence !

Pal. And let me tell thee

This Mirvan, this fierce Mirvan gives me terrors :

So far from tend'ring consolation to me,

His theme is blood and slaughter. As I met him

His eyes flam'd fury, whilst in dubious phrase

He thus bespoke me—The destroying angel

Must be let loose—Palmira, Heaven ordains

Some glorious deed for thee, yet hid in darkness ;

Learn an implicit rev'rence for its will ;

And above all I warn thee fear for Zaphna.

Zaph. What could he mean ? can I believe, Alcanor,

Thy fair deportment but a treacherous mask ?

Yet spite of all the rage that ought to fire me

Against this rebel to our faith and prophet

I've held me happy in his friendship,

And bondage wore the livery of choice.

Pal. How has Heaven fraught our love-link'd hearts, my

Zaphna,

With the same thoughts, aversions, and desires !

But for thy safety and our dread religion,

That thunders hatred to all infidels,
With great remorse I should accuse Alcanor.

Zaph. Let us shake off this vain remorse, Palmira,
Resign ourselves to Heaven and act its pleasure.
The hour is come that I must pledge my vow:
Doubt not but the Supreme, who claims this service,
Will prove propitious to our chaste endearments.
Farewell, my love! I fly to gain the summit
Of earth's felicity—to gain Palmira. [*Exit.*]

Pal. Where'er I turn me here 'tis all suspicion.
What means this vow? Mirvan, I like thee not:
Alcanor too distracts my tim'rous breast:
Ev'n Mahomet's self I dread, whilst I invoke him.
Like one benighted 'midst a place of tombs
I gaze around me, start at ev'ry motion,
And seem hemm'd in by visionary spectres.
All-righteous Power, whom, trembling, I adore,
And blindly follow, oh, deliver me
From these heart-rending terrors!—Ha! who's here?

Enter MAHOMET.

'T is he! 'tis Mahomet himself! kind Heaven
Has sent him to my aid—My gracious lord!
Protect the dear, dear idol of my soul;
Save Zaphna; guard him from——

Mab. From what!—why Zaphna?
Whence this vain terror? is he not with us?

Pal. Oh, sir, you double now my apprehensions!
Those broken accents and that eager look
Shew you have anguish smoth'ring at the heart,
And prove for once that Mahomet's a mortal.

Mab. [*Apart.*] Ha! I shall turn a traitor to myself—
O, woman! woman! hear me; ought I not

To be enrag'd at thy prophane attachment?
How could thy breast, without the keenest sting,
Harbour one thought not dictated by me?
Is that young mind I took such toil to form
Turn'd an ingrate and infidel at once?
Away, rebellious maid——

Pal. What dost thou say,
My royal lord? Thus prostrate at your feet
Let me implore forgiveness, if in aught
I have offended: talk not to me thus;
A frown from thee, my father, and my king,
Is death to poor Palmira. Say then, Mahomet,
Didst thou not in this very place permit him
To tender me his vows?

Mab. [*Apart.*] “His vows! perdition!”
How the soft trait'ress racks me!—Rise, Palmira——
[*Apart.*] Down, rebel love! I must be calm—Come hither;
Beware, rash maid, of such imprudent steps,
They lead to guilt. What wild pernicious errors
Mayn't the heart yield to if not greatly watch'd!

Pal. In loving Zaphna sure it cannot err;
There's nothing wild, nothing pernicious——

Mab. How!
This theme delights you——

Pal. I must own it does.
Yes, my great master, for I still have thought
That Heaven itself approv'd of my affection,
And gave a sanction to our mutual ardors.
Can what was virtue once be now a crime?
Can I be guilty——

Mab. Yes—towards me you are——
You, nurs'd from infancy beneath my eye,
Child of my care, and pupil of my faith,

You, whom my partial fondness still distinguish'd
From all the captive youths that grac'd my triumphs,
And you, who now without my leave permit
A slave to bear thee from my sight for ever.

Pal. No, we both live, nay more, would die for thee:
And oh, my lord! if all that earth can offer
Of grandeur, opulence, or pleasure, e'er
Shall make me deaf to gratitude's demands,
May Zaphna's self be evidence against me,
And plead for double vengeance on my treachery.

Mab. [*Apart.*] Zaphna again! Furies! I shall relapse!
And make her witness of my weakness.

Pal. Sir!

What sudden start of passion arms that eye?

Mab. Oh, nothing: pray retire a while: take courage;
I'm not at all displeas'd: 't was but to sound
The depth of thy young heart. I praise thy choice;
Trust then thy dearest interest to my bosom:
But know your fate depends on your obedience.
If I have been a guardian to your youth,
If all my lavish bounties past weigh aught,
Deserve the future blessings which await you.
Howe'er the voice of Heaven dispose of Zaphna,
Confirm him in the path, where duty leads,
That he may keep his vow, and merit thee.

Pal. Distrust him not, my sov'reign; noble Zaphna
Disdains to lag in love or glory's cause.

Mab. Enough of words——

Pal. As boldly I've avow'd
The love I bear that hero at your feet,
I'll now to him, and fire his gen'rous breast
To prove the duty he has sworn to thee. [*Exit Pal.*]

Mab. [*Alone.*] Confusion: must I, spite o' me, be made

The confidant of her incestuous passion?
 What could I say? such sweet simplicity
 Lur'd down my rage, and innocently wing'd
 The arrow through my heart. And shall I bear this?
 Be made the sport of curs'd Alcanor's house?
 Check'd in my rapid progress by the sire,
 Supplanted in my love by this rash boy,
 And made a gentle pander to the daughter?
 Perdition on the whole detested race!

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Now, Mahomet, is the time to seize on Mecca,
 Crush this Alcanor, and enjoy Palmira.

This night the old enthusiast offers incense
 To his vain gods in sacred Caabo:

Zaphna, who flames with zeal for heaven and thee,
 May be won o'er to seize that lucky moment.

Mab. He shall; It must be so; he's born to act
 The glorious crime; and let him be at once
 The instrument and victim of the murder.
 My law, my love, my vengeance, my own safety,
 Have doom'd it so—But, Mirvan, dost thou think
 His youthful courage, nurs'd in superstition,
 Can e'er be work'd—

Mir. I tell thee, Mahomet,
 He's tutor'd to accomplish thy design.
 Palmira too, who thinks thy will is Heaven's,
 Will nerve his arm to execute thy pleasure.
 Love and enthusiasm blind her youth:
 They're still most zealous who're most ignorant.

Mab. Didst thou engage him by a solemn vow?

Mir. I did, with all th'enthusiastic pomp
 Thy law enjoins; then gave him, as from thee,

A consecrated sword to avenge thy will.
Oh, he is burning with religious fury!

Mab. But hold, he comes——

Enter ZAPHNA.

Child of that awful and tremendous power
Whose laws I publish, whose behests proclaim,
Listen whilst I unfold his sacred will:
'Tis thine to vindicate his ways to man,
'Tis thine his injur'd worship to avenge.

Zaph. Thou lord of nations, delegate of Heaven,
Sent to shed day o'er the benighted world,
Oh, say in what can Zaphna prove his duty!
Instruct me how a frail earth-prison'd mortal
Can or avenge or vindicate a god.

Mab. By thy weak arm he deigns to prove his cause,
And launch his vengeance on blaspheming rebels.

Zaph. What glorious action, what illustrious danger
Does that Supreme, whose image thou demand?
Place me, oh, place me! in the front of battle
'Gainst odds innumerable; try me there;
Or, if a single combat claim my might,
The stoutest Arab may step forth and see
If Zaphna fail to greet him as he ought.

Mab. Oh, greatly said, my son; 'tis inspiration!
but heed me: 'tis not by a glaring act
Of human valour Heaven has will'd to prove thee;
This infidels themselves may boast, when led
By ostentation, rage, or brute-like rashness.
To do whate'er Heaven gives in sacred charge,
Nor dare to sound its fathomless decrees,
'This, and this only's meritorious zeal.

Attend, adore, obey; thou shalt be arm'd
By death's remorseless angel which awaits me.

Zaph. Speak out, pronounce; what victim must I offer!
What tyrant sacrifice? whose blood requir'st thou?

Mab. The blood of a detested infidel,
A murderer, a foe to Heaven and me,
A wretch who slew my child, blasphemes my god,
And, like a huge Colossus, bears a world
Of impious opposition to my faith:
The blood of curst Alcanor.

Zaph. I!—Alcanor!

Mab. What! dost thou hesitate! Rash youth, beware;
He that deliberates is sacrilegious.
Far, far from me be those audacious mortals,
Who for themselves would impiously judge,
Or see with their own eyes; who dares to think
Was never born a proselyte for me.
Know who I am; know on this very spot
I've charg'd thee with the just decree of Heaven,
And when that Heaven requires of thee no more
Than the bare off'ring of its deadliest foe,
Nay, thy foe too, and mine, why dost thou balance,
As thy own father were the victim claim'd!
Go, vile idolater! false Mussulman!
Go seek another master, a new faith.

Zaph. Oh, Mahomet!

Mab. Just when the prize is ready,
When fair Palmira's destin'd to thy arms—
But what's Palmira? or what's Heaven to thee,
Thou poor weak rebel to thy faith and love!
Go serve and cringe to our detested foe.

Zaph. Oh, pardon, Mahomet! methinks I hear
The oracle of Heaven—It shall be done.

Mah. Obey then, strike, and for his impious blood,
Palmira' charms and Paradise be thine.

[*" Apart to Mirvan.*] Mirvan, attend him close, and let thy
eyes

" Be fix'd on ev'ry movement of his soul." [Exit.

Zaph. [*Alone.*] Soft, let me think—This duty wears the
face

Of something more than monstrous—Pardon, Heaven!

To sacrifice an innocent old man,

Weigh'd down with age, unsuccour'd and unarm'd!

When I am hostage for his safety too!—

No matter, Heaven has chose me for the duty;

My vow is past and must be straight fulfilled.

Ye stern relentless ministers of wrath,

Spirits of vengeance! by whose ruthless hands

The haughty tyrants of the earth have bled,

Come to my succour, to my flaming zeal

Join your determin'd courage;

And thou, angel

Of Mahomet, exterminating angel!

That mow'st down nations to prepare his passage,

Support my falt'ring will, harden my heart,

Lest nature, pity, plead Alcanor's cause,

And wrest the dagger from me.

Hah! who comes here?

Enter ALCANOR.

Alca. Whence, Zaphna, that deep gloom,

That, like a blasting mildew on the ear

Of promis'd harvest, blackens o'er thy visage?

Grieve not that here, through form, thou art confin'd;

I hold thee not as hostage but as friend,

And make thy safety partner with my own.

Zaph. [*Apart.*] And make my safety partner with thy own!

Alca. The bloody carnage, by this truce suspended
For a few moments, like a torrent check'd
In its full flow, will, with redoubled strength,
Bear all before it——
In this impending scene of public horror
Be then, dear youth! these mansions thy asylum:
I'll be thy hostage now, and with my life
Will answer that no mischief shall befall thee.
I know not why, but thou art precious to me.

Zaph. Heaven, duty, gratitude, humanity! [*Apart.*]
What didst thou say, Alcanor? Didst thou say
That thy own roof should shield me from the tempest?
That thy own life stood hostage for my safety?

Alca. Why thus amaz'd at my compassion for thee?
I am a man myself, and that's enough
To make me feel the woes of other men,
And labour to redress 'em——

Zaph. [*Apart.*] What melody these accents make!
And, whilst my own religion spurs to murder,
His precepts of humanity prevail.
[*To Alcanor.*] Can then a foe to Mahomet's sacred law
Be virtue's friend?

Alca. Thou know'st but little, Zaphna,
If thou dost think true virtue is confin'd
To climes or systems; no, it flows spontaneous,
Like life's warm stream throughout the whole creation,
And beats the pulse of ev'ry healthful heart.
How canst thou, Zaphna, worship for thy god,
A being, claiming cruelty and murders
From his adorers? Such is thy master's god——

Zaph. [*Apart.*] Oh, my relenting soul! thou'rt almost
thaw'd

From thy resolve—I pray you, sir, no more.

Peace, reason, peace!

Alca. [*Apart.*] The more I view him, talk with him, observe
His understanding tow'ring 'bove his age,
His candour, which ev'n bigotry can't smother,
The more my breast takes int'rest in his welfare.
Zaphna, come near—I oft have thought to ask thee
To whom thou ow'st thy birth, whose gen'rous blood
Swells thy young veins and mantles at thy heart.

Zaph. That dwells in darkness; no one friendly beam
E'er gave me glimpse from whom I am descended.
The camp of godlike Mahomet has been
My cradle and my country, whilst of all
His captive infants no one more has shar'd
The sunshine of his clemency and care.

Alca. I do not blame thy gratitude, young man;
But why was Mahomet thy benefactor?
Why was not I? I envy him that glory.
Why then this impious man has been a father
Alike to thee and to the fair Palmira?

Zaph. Oh!

Alca. What's the cause, my Zaphna, of that sigh,
And all that language of a smother'd anguish?
Why didst thou snatch away thy cordial eye
That shone on me before?

Zaph. [*Apart.*] Oh, my torn heart!
Palmira's name revives the racking thought
Of my near blunted purpose.

Alca. Come, my friend;
The flood-gates of destruction soon thrown ope
Will pour in ruin on that curse of nations.
If I can save but thee and fair Palmira
From this o'erflowing tide, let all the rest

Of his abandon'd minions be the victims
For your deliverance—I must save your blood.

Zaph. [*Apart.*] Just Heaven! and is't not I must shed
his blood?

Alca. Nay, tremble if thou dar'st to hesitate.
Follow me straight.

Enter PHARON.

Pba. Alcanor, read that letter,
Put in my hands this moment by an Arab
With utmost stealth, and air, bespeaking somewhat
Of high importance.

Alc. [*Reads.*] Whence is this?—Hercides!—
Cautious, my eyes! be sure you're not mistaken
In what you here insinuate. Gracious Heaven!
Will then thy providence at length o'er-rule
My wayward fate, and by one matchless blessing
Sweeten the sufferings of a threescore years!

[*After looking some time earnestly at Zaphna.*

Follow me.

Zaph. Thee!—But Mahomet—

Alca. Thy life

And all its future bliss dwells on this moment.

Follow, I say.

[*Exeunt Alcanor and Pharon.*

*Enter MIRVAN and his Attendants hastily on the other side of
the Stage.*

Mir. [*To Zaph.*] Traitor, turn back; what means
This conference with the foe? To Mahomet
Away this instant; he commands thy presence.

Zaph. [*Apart.*] Where am I?—Heavens! how shall I
now resolve!

How act! a precipice on ev'ry side

"Awaits me," and the first, least step's perdition.

Mir. Young man, our prophet brooks not such delay;

Go stop the bolt that's ready to be launch'd

On thy rebellious head.

Zaph. Yes, and renounce

This horrid vow that's poison to my soul.

[*Exit with Mirvan, &c.*]

Re-enter ALCANOR and PHARON.

Alca. Where is this Zaphna?—But he flies me still:

In vain I call in all the softening arts

Of pity, love, and friendship, to engage him:

His breast is sear'd by that impostor's precepts

'Gainst all who bid defiance to his laws.

But, Pharon, didst thou mark the baneful gloom,

That somewhat like reluctance, rage, and pity,

That blended sat upon his pensive brow?

Pha. I did; there's something at his heart——

Alca. There is——

Would I could fathom it!—This letter, Pharon,

His aspect, age, the transport that I taste

When he is near me, the anxiety

His absence gives, do too much violence

To my distracted sense. Hercides here

Desires to see me; 't was his barbarous hands

That robb'd me of my children; they are living,

He tells me, under Mahomet's protection,

And he has something to unfold, on which

Their destiny and mine depends. This Zaphna,

And young Palmira, vassals of that tyrant,

Are ignorant from whom they are descended.

Imagination's pregnant with the thought.

My wishes mock me. Sinking with my grief
I blindly catch at ev'ry flattering error,
And supplicate deception's self for succour.

Pba. Hope, but yet fear, Alcanor : think, my chief,
How many infants from their parents torn,
Ere conscious whose they are, attend that tyrant,
Drink in his dictates, place their being in him,
And deem him an infallible dispenser
Of Heaven's decisions——

Alca. Well, no matter, Pharon :
At noon of night conduct Hercides hither ;
Thy master in th' adjoining fane once more
Will importune the gods with prayers and incense,
That he may save his friends and see his children.

Pba. Thou shalt not find thy Pharon slack in aught
That tends to thy deliverance from this anguish. [Exit.

Alca. Just Heaven ! if by erroneous thought or act
I have drawn down your fierce displeasure on me,
Point me to right, I'll onward to its goal
With double energy, will expiate all,
That in the days of ignorance might offend ;
Only restore my children to my care,
Give to my craving arms my hapless children,
That I may form them, turn 'em back from wrong,
Weed their young minds of those pernicious errors
The arch impostor has implanted in 'em,
Train 'em in virtue's school, and lead them on
To deeds of glorious and immortal honour. [Exit.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Mahomet's Apartment. MAHOMET alone.

Mahomet.

AMBITION knows not conscience——
Well, this Zaphna
Is fix'd at length——I lesson'd him so home,
Dealt to his young enthusiastic soul
Such promises and threats——

Enter MIRVAN.

Mirvan, what news?

Mir. Oh, Mahomet, I fear the nice-woven web
Of our design's unravell'd. Ere thy spirit
Had re-inflam'd young Zaphna with the thirst
Of old Alcanor's blood he had reveal'd
The dreadful purpose to Hercides——

Mab. Hah!

Mir. Hercides loves the youth, and Zaphna still
Has held him as a father.

Mab. That I like not.

What does Hercides say? thinks he with us?

Mir. Oh, no; he trembles at the very thought
Of this dread scene, compassionates Alcanor,
And——

Mab. He's but a half friend then, and a half friend
Is not a span from traitor. Mirvan, Mirvan,
A dangerous witness must be some way dwelt with——
Am I obey'd?

Mir. 'Tis done.

Mab. Then for the rest——

Or e'er the harbinger of morrow's dawn
Gleam in the East, Alcanor, thou must set,
Or Mahomet and all his hopes must perish :
That's the first step then—Zaphna, next for thee.
Soon as thy hands have dealt the midnight mischief
In thy own blood the secret must be drown'd.
Thus quit of son and father (those curst rivals
Who elbow me at once in love and grandeur)
Both Mecca and Palmira shall be mine.
Oh, tow'ring prospect! how it fills the eye
Of my aspiring and enamour'd soul!
Night! put on double sable, that no star
May be a spy on those dark deeds——Well, Mirvan,
Shall we accomplish this?

Mir. We shall, my chief.

Mab. What, though I seize his life from whom she sprang?
He's not her father as she knows it not.
Trust me, those partial ties of blood and kindred
Are but the illusive taints of education :
What we call nature is mere habit, Mirvan ;
That habit's on our side ; for the whole study
Of this young creature's life has been obedience,
To think, believe, and act, as pleasur'd me.
But hold, the hour on which our fortune hangs
Is now at hand. While Zaphna seeks the temple
Let us look round us, see that not a wheel
Lag in the vast machine we have at work :
It is success that consecrates our actions :
The vanquish'd rebel as a rebel dies,
The victor-rebel plumes him on a throne.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Changes to the Temple. Enter ZAPHNA with a Sword in his hand.

Zaph. Well then, it must be so; I must discharge
This cruel duty—Mahomet enjoins it,
And Heaven through him demands it of my hands.
Horrid, though sacred act!—my soul shrinks back,
And won't admit conviction—Ay, but Heaven!
Heaven's call I must obey—Oh, dire obedience!
What dost thou cost me! my humanity!
Why, duty, art thou thus at war with nature?

Enter PALMIRA.

Thou here, Palmira! oh! what fatal transport
Leads thee to this sad place, these dark abodes,
Sacred to death? Thou hast no bus'ness here.

Pal. Oh, Zaphna, fear and love have been my guides.
What horrid sacrifice is this enjoin'd thee?
What victim does the god of Mahomet
Claim from thy tender hand?

Zaph. Oh, my guardian angel,
Speak, resolve me;
How can assassination be a virtue?
How can the gracious parent of mankind
Delight in mankind's suff'rings? May n't this prophet,
This great announcer of his heavenly will,
Mistake it once?

Pal. Oh, tremble to examine.
He sees our hearts. To doubt is to blaspheme.

Zaph. Be steady then, my soul, firm to thy purpose,
And let religion steel thee against pity.
Come forth thou foe to Mahomet and Heaven,

And meet the doom thy rebel faith deserves ;
Come forth, Alcanor !

Pal. Who, Alcanor !

Zaph. Yes.

Pal. The good Alcanor ?

Zaph. Why d' ye call him good ?

Curse on his Pagan virtues ! he must die,
So Mahomet commands : and yet methinks
Some other deity arrests my arm,
And whispers to my heart—Zaphna, forbear !

Pal. Distracted state !

Zaph. Alas ! my dear Palmira,
I'm weak, and shudder at this bloody bus'ness.
Help me, oh help, Palmira ! I am torn,
Distracted with this conflict.
Zeal, horror, love, and pity, seize my breast,
And drag it diff'rent ways. Alas ! Palmira,
You see me tossing on a sea of passions ;
'T is thine, my angel, to appease this tempest,
Fix my distracted will, and teach me——

Pal. What !

What can I teach thee in this strife of passions ?
Oh, Zaphna ! I revere our holy prophet,
Think all his laws are register'd in Heaven,
And ev'ry mandate minted in the skies.

Zaph. But then to break through hospitality,
And murder him by whom we are protected !

Pal. Oh, poor Alcanor ! gen'rous, good Alcanor !
My heart bleeds for thee.

Zaph. Know then, unless I act this horrid scene,
Unless I plunge this dagger in the breast
Of that old man, I must—I must——

Pal. What——

Zaph. Must, Palmira——

(Oh, agonizing thought!) lose thee for ever.

Pal. Am I the price of good Alcanor's blood?

Zaph. So Mahomet ordains.

Pal. Horrible dowry!

Zaph. Thou know'st the curse our prophet hath denounc'd

Of endless tortures on the disobedient?

Thou know'st with what an oath I've bound myself

To vindicate his laws, extirpate all

That dare oppose his progress: say then, fair one,

Thou tutoress divine, instruct me how—

How to obey my chief, perform my oath,

Yet list to mercy's call.

Pal. This rends my heart.

Zaph. How to avoid being banish'd thee for ever.

Pal. Oh, save me from that thought! must that e'er be?

Zaph. It must not: thou hast now pronounc'd his doom.

Pal. What doom? Have I!

Zaph. Yes, thou hast seal'd his death.

Pal. I seal his death!—Did I?

Zaph. 'Twas Heaven spoke by thee; thou'rt its oracle,
And I'll fulfill its laws. This is the hour

In which he pays at the adjoining altar

Black rites to his imaginary gods.

Follow me not, Palmira!

Pal. I must follow;

I will not, dare not leave thee.

Zaph. Gentle maid,

I beg thee fly these walls; thou canst not bear

This horrid scene—Oh, these are dreadful moments!

Begone—quick—this way——

Pal. No, I follow thee,

Retread thy ev'ry footstep, though they lead
To the dark gulf of death.

Zaph. Thou matchless maid!—to the dire trial then.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Draws and discovers the inner part of the Temple, with a Pagan Altar and Images, ALCANOR addressing himself to the Idols.

Alca. Eternal Powers! that deign to bless these mansions,
Protectors of the sons of Ishmael,
Crush, crush this blasphemous invader's force,
And turn him back with shame. If power be your's
Oh! shield your injur'd votaries, and lay
Oppression bleeding at your altar's foot.

Enter ZAPHNA and PALMIRA.

Pal. [*Entering.*] Aft not this bloody deed: Oh, save him,
save him!

Zaph. Save him, and lose both Paradise and thee!

Pal. Hah, yonder he stands—Oh! Zaphna, all my blood
Is frozen at the sight.

Alca. 'Tis in your own behalf that I implore
The terrors of your might; swift, swiftly
Pour vengeance on this vile apostate's head,
Who dares profanely wrest your thunder from you,
And lodge it with an unknown, fancy'd god.

Zaph. Hear how the wretch blasphemes! So, now——

Pal. Hold, Zaphna!

Zaph. Let me go——

Pal. I cannot—cannot.

Alca. But if, for reasons which dim-sighted mortals

Can't look into, you'll crown this daring rebel
With loyalty and priesthood, take my life :
And if, ye gracious Powers! you've ought of bliss
In store for me, at my last hour permit me
To see my children, pour my blessing on them,
Expire in their dear arms, and let them close
These eyes, which then would wish no aftersight.

Pal. His children, did he say ?

Zaph. I think he did——

Alca. For this I'll at your altar pay my vows,
And make it smoke with incense. [*Retires behind the altar.*]

Zaph. " Now 's the time ;" [*Drawing his sword.*]
Insulting Heaven, he flies to stones for refuge :
Now let me strike.

Pal. Stay but one moment, Zaphna.

Zaph. It must not be—unhand me.

Pal. What to do ?

Zaph. To serve my God and king, and merit thee.

[*Breaking from Palmira, and going towards the altar, he starts, and stops short.*]

Ha ! what are ye, ye terrifying shades ?
What means this lake of blood that lies before me ?

Pal. Oh, Zaphna ! let us fly these horrid roofs.

Zaph. No, no—go on, ye ministers of death ;
Lead me the way : I'll follow ye.

Pal. Stay, Zaphna ;

Heap no more horrors on me ; I'm expiring
Beneath the load.

Zaph. Be hush'd—the altar trembles !

What means that omen ! does it spur to murder,
Or would it rein me back ? No, 'tis the voice
Of Heaven itself that chides my ling'ring hand.
Now send up thither all thy vows, Palmira.

Whilst I obey its will and give the stroke.

[Goes out behind the Altar after Alcanor.]

Pal. What vows? will Heaven receive a murd'rer's vows?
For sure I'm such whilst I prevent not murder.
Why beats my heart thus? what soft voice is this
That's waken'd in my soul, and preaches mercy?
If Heaven demands his life, dare I oppose?
Is it my place to judge?—Hah! that dire groan
Proclaims the bloody bus'ness is about.
Zaphna! oh, Zaphna!

Re-enter ZAPHNA.

Zaph. Ha! where am I!
Who calls me? where's Palmira? she's not here:
What fiend has snatch'd her from me?

Pal. Heavens! he raves!
Dost thou not know me, Zaphna! her who lives
For thee alone?—Why dost thou gaze thus on me?

Zaph. Where are we?
Pal. Hast thou then discharg'd
The horrid duty?

Zaph. What dost thou say?
Pal. Alcanor——
Zaph. Alcanor! what Alcanor?
Pal. Gracious Heaven,

Look down upon him!
Let's begone, my Zaphna,
Let's fly this place.

Zaph. Oh, whither fly! to whom?
D'ye see these hands? who will receive these hands?
Pal. Oh, come, and let me wash them with my tears!
Zaph. Who art thou? let me lean on thee—I find

My powers returning. Is it thou, Palmira?
Where have I been? what have I done?

Pal. I know not:

Think on't no more.

Zaph. But I must think and talk on't too, Palmira.

I seiz'd the victim by his hoary locks——

(Thou, Heaven, didst will it)

Then, shuddering with horror, bury'd straight

The poignard in his breast, I had redoubled

The bloody plunge—(what cannot zeal persuade!)

But that the venerable sire pour'd forth

So piteous a groan! look'd so, Palmira——

And with a feeble voice cry'd, is it Zaphna?

I could no more. Oh! hadst thou seen, my love,

The fell, fell dagger in his bosom, view'd

His dying face, where sat such dignity,

Cloth'd with compassion towards his base assassin.

[Throwing himself on the ground.]

The dire remembrance weighs me to the earth——

Here let me die——

Pal. Rise, my lov'd Zaphna! rise,

And let us fly to Mahomet for protection:

If we are found in these abodes of slaughter

Tortures and death attend us: let us fly.

Zaph. *[Starting up.]* I did fly at that blasting sight, Palmira.

When drawing out the fatal steel, he cast

Such tender looks! I fled—the fatal steel,

The voice, the tender looks, the bleeding victim

Blessing his murderer, I could not fly:

No, they clung to me, riv'd my throbbing heart,

And set my brain on fire. What have we done!

Pal. Hark! what's that noise? I tremble for thy life.

Oh! in the name of love, by all the ties,
Those sacred ties that bind thee mine for ever,
I do conjure thee follow me.

[Alcanor comes from behind the altar, leaning against it, with
the bloody sword in his hand.]

Zaph. Hah! look, Palmira, see what object's that
Which bears upon my tortur'd sight? Is't he?
Or is't his bloody manes come to haunt us?

Pal. 'Tis he himself, poor wretch! struggling with death,
And feebly crawling tow'rds us. Let me fly
And yield what help I can: let me support thee,
Thou much lamented, injur'd, good old man!

Zaph. Why do n't I move? my feet are rooted here,
And all my frame is struck and wither'd up
As with a lightning's blast.

Alca. My gentle maid,
Wilt thou support me?
Weep not, my Palmira.

Pal. I could weep tears of blood if that would serve thee.

*Alca. [Sitting down.] Zaphna, come hither; thou hast
ta'en my life,

For what offence, or what one thought towards thee
That anger or malevolence gave birth,
Heaven knows I am unconscious. Do not look so:
I see thou dost relent.

Enter PHARON hastily.

Pal. [Starting back.] Hah! 't is too late then.

Alca. Would I could see Hercides?—Pharon, lo
Thy martyr'd friend by his distemper'd hand
Is now expiring.

Pha. Dire unnatural crime!

Oh, wretched parricide! behold thy father. [Pointing to Alc.]

Zaph. My father !

Pal. Father ! hah !

Alca. Mysterious Heaven !

Pha. Hercides dying by the hand of Mirvan,
Who slew him lest he should betray the secret,
Saw me approach, and in the pangs of death,
Cry'd, fly and save Alcanor ; wrest the sword
From Zaphna's hands if 't is not yet too late,
That's destin'd for his death : then let him know
That Zaphna and Palmira are his children !

Pal. That Zaphna and Palmira are his children !
Dost hear that, Zaphna ?

Zaph. 'T is enough, my fate !
Canst thou ought more ?

Alca. Oh, nature ! oh, my children ?
By what vile instigations wert thou driven,
Unhappy Zaphna ! to this bloody action !

Zaph. [*Falling at his father's feet.*] Oh, I cannot speak ;
Restore me, sir, restore that damned weapon.
That I for once may make it, as I ought,
An instrument of justice..

Pal. [*Kneeling.*] Oh, my father,
Strike here ; the crime was mine ; 't was I alone
That work'd his will to this unnat'ral deed ;
Upon these terms alone he could be mine,
And incest was the price of parricide.

Zaph. Strike your assassins——

Alca. I embrace my children,
And joy to see them, though my life's the forfeit.
Rise, children, rise and live ; live to revenge
Your father's death—But in the name of Nature,
By the remains of this paternal blood
That's oozing from my wound, raise not your hands

'Gainst your own being. Zaphna, wouldst thou do me
A second deadlier mischief?
Self-slaughter can't atone for parricide.

Zaph. Then I will live,
Live to some purpose: this is glorious suffering.

Alca. Thy undetermin'd arm ha' n't quite fulfill'd
Its bigot purpose; I hope to live to animate
Our friends 'gainst this impostor; lead them, Zaphna,
To root out a rapacious baneful crew,
Whose zeal is phrensy, whose religion murder.

Zaph. Swift, swift, ye hours! and light me to revenge!
Come, thou infernal weapon. [*Snatches the bloody sword.*]
I'll wash off thy foul stain with the heart's blood
Of that malignant, sanctified assassin.

As Zaphna is going off, MIRVAN and his Followers enter and stop him.

Mir. Seize Zaphna,
And load the trait'rous murderer with chains:
Help you the good Alcanor—Hapless man!
Our prophet in a vision learnt to-night
The mournful tale of thy untimely end,
And sent me straight to seize the vile assassin,
That he might wreak severest justice on him:
Mahomet comes to vindicate the laws,
Not suffer with impunity their breach.

Alca. Heavens! what accumulated crimes are here!

Zaph. Where is the monster? bear me instant to him,
That I may blast him with my eye, may curse him
With my last hesitating voice.

Pal. Thou traitor,
Did not thy own death-doing tongue enjoin
This horrid deed?

Mir. Not mine, by Heaven!

Zaph. Not thine!

Mir. No, by our prophet and his holy faith,
Of all the thoughts ere harbour'd in this breast
It ne'er had such a monster for its tenant.

Zaph. Most accomplish'd villain!

Mirvan, look at me—dar'st thou—

Mir. Off with him, [To the Soldiers.

And see him well secur'd, till Mahomet
Demands him of you.

Pal. Villain, hold! [Laying hold of Zaphna.

Mir. Away.

Zaph. Just, just reward of my credulity!

Pal. Let me go with him; I will share thy fate
Unhappy Zaphna, for I share thy guilt.

But then— [Looking back at Alcanor.

Mir. No more—you must to Mahomet;
Obey without reluctance: our great prophet,
In pity to your tender frame and years,
Will take you under his divine protection.

Pal. [Apart.] Oh, death! deliver me from such protection!

Mir. If you would ought to save the destin'd Zaphna
Follow me to the prophet; you may move him
To mitigate his doom—Away.

[To the Soldiers who hold Zaphna.

You, this way.

[To Pal.

Zaph. Pardon!

Pal. Oh, pardon!

[They are led off by degrees, looking alternately at their father
and each other.

Alca. Oh, insupportable!

Both from me torn then when I wanted most
Their consolation.

[*A shout.*

Pba. Hark!

The citizens are rous'd and all in arms
Rush on to your defence.

Alca. Pharon, support me

Some moments longer—Help, conduct me towards them :
Bare this wound to them ; let that speak the cause,
The treach'rous cause, for words begin to fail me !
Then, if in death I can but serve my country,
Save my poor children from this tiger's gripe,
And give a second life to that lov'd pair
By whose misguided zeal I lose my own ;
What patriot or parent but would wish
In so divine a cause to fall a martyr !

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

Enter MAHOMET and MIRVAN.

Mahomet.

WRONG will be ever nurs'd and fed with blood—
So this boy bigot held his pious purpose ?

Mir. Devoutly.

Mab. What a reasonless machine
Can superstition make the reas'ner man !
Alcanor lies there on his bed of earth !

Mir. This moment he expir'd, and Mecca's youth
In vain lament their chief. To the mad crowd
That gather'd round good Ali and myself
(Full of thy dauntless heavenly-seeming spirit)
Disclaim'd the deed, and pointed out the arm
Of righteous Heaven that strikes for Mahomet—
Think ye we cry'd (with eyes and hands uprear'd)

Think ye our holy prophet would consent
 To such a crime, whose foulness casts a blot
 On right of nations, nature, and our faith?
 Oh, rather think he will revenge his death,
 And root his murd'rer from the burthen'd earth!
 Then struck our breasts, and wept the good old man,
 And only wish'd he died among the faithful,
 And slept with Ibrahim.

Mab. Excellent Mirvan!

Mir. We then both at large
 Descanted on thy clemency and bounty:
 On that the silent and desponding crowd
 Broke out in murmurs, complaints, and last, in shouts,
 And each mechanic grew a Mussulman.

Mab. Oh, worthy to deceive and awe the world,
 Second to Mahomet! let me embrace thee—
 But say is not our army at their gates
 To back our clemency?

Mir. Omar commands
 Their nightly march through unsuspected paths,
 And with the morn appears.

Mab. At sight of them
 The weak remaining billows of this storm
 Will lash themselves to peace—But where is Zaphna?

Mir. Safe in a dungeon where he dies apace,
 Unconscious of his fate: for well thou know'st
 Ere at the altar's foot he slew his sire
 In his own veins he bore his guilt's reward,
 A deadly draught of poison.

Mab. I would be kind, and let him die deceiv'd,
 Nor know that parent-blood defiles his soul.

Mir. He cannot know it: if the grave be silent
 I'm sure Heracles is——

Mab. Unhappy Zaphna!

Something like pity checks me for thy death.
 But why—I must not think that way—shall Mahomet
 Give a new Paradise to all mankind,
 And let remorse of conscience be the hell
 Of his own breast! My safety claim'd his life,
 And all the heaven of fair Palmira's charms
 Shall be my great reward.

Mer. My noble lord,
 Palmira is at hand, and waits your pleasure.

Mab. At hand! How, Mirvan, couldst thou let me talk
 On themes of guilt when that pure angel's near?

Mir. The weeping fair, led on by flatt'ring hope
 Of Zaphna's life, attends your sacred will:
 A silent pale dejection shrouds her cheeks,
 And, like the lily in a morning shower,
 She droops her head and locks up all her sweets.

Mab. Say Mahomet awaits, and then
 Assemble all our chiefs, and on this platform
 Let them attend me straight. [Exit Mir.]

Enter PALMIRA with Attendants.

Pal. [*Apart.*] Where have they led me?
 Methinks each step I take, the mangled corpse
 Of my dear father (by poor Zaphna mangled)
 Lies in my way, and all I see is blood— [Starting.]
 'Tis the impostor's self!—Burst heart, in silence.

Mab. Maid, lay aside this dread. Palmira's fate
 And that of Mecca by my will is fix'd.
 This great event, that fills thy soul with horror
 Is mystery to all but Heaven and Mahomet.

Pal. Oh, ever righteous Heaven! canst thou suffer
 This sacrilegious hypocrite, this spoiler,
 To steal thy terrors, and blaspheme thy name,
 Nor doom him instant dead? [Aside.]

Mab. Child of my care,
At length from galling chains I've set thee free,
And made thee triumph in a just revenge;
Think then thou'rt dear to me, and Mahomet
Regards thee with a more than father's eye:
Then know (if thou'lt deserve the mighty boon)
An higher name, a nobler fate, awaits thee.

Pal. What would the tyrant?—

Mab. Raise thy thoughts to glory,
And sweep this Zaphna from thy memory,
With all that's past—Let that mean flame expire
Before the blaze of empire's radiant sun.
Thy grateful heart must answer to my bounties,
Follow my laws, and share in all my conquests.

Pal. What laws, what bounties, and what conquest, tyrant?
Fraud is thy law, the tomb thy only bounty,
Thy conquests fatal as infected air,
Dispeopling half the globe—See here, good Heaven!
The venerable prophet I rever'd,
The king I serv'd, the god that I ador'd.

Mab. [*Approaching her.*] Whence this unwonted language,
this wild frenzy?

Pal. Where is the spirit of my martyr'd father?
Where Zaphna's? where Palmira's innocence?
Blasted by thee, by thee, infernal monster—
Thou found'st us angels, and hast made us fiends:
Give, give us back our lives, our fame, our virtue:
Thou canst not, tyrant—yet thou seek'st my love,
Seek'st with Alcanor's blood his daughter's love.

Mab. [*Apart.*] Horror and death! the fatal secret's known.

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Oh, Mahomet, all's lost, thy glory tarnish'd,
And th' insatiate tomb ripe to devour us!

Hercides' parting breath divulg'd the secret,
 The prison's forc'd, the city all in arms:
 See where they bear aloft their murder'd chief,
 Fell Zaphna in their front, death in his looks,
 Rage all his strength. Spite of the deadly draught
 He holds in life but to make sure of vengeance.

Mab. What dost thou hear then? instant with our guards,
 Attempt to stem their progress, till the arrival
 Of Omar with the troops.

Mir. I haste, my lord.

[*Exit Mir.*]

Pal. Now, now, my hour's at hand.

Hear'st thou those shouts that rend the ambient air?
 Seest thou those glancing fires that add new horrors
 To the night's gloom? fresh from thy murd'ring poignard,
 (For thine it was, though Zaphna gave the blow)
 My father's spirit leads the vengeful shades
 Of all the wretches whom thy sword has butcher'd:
 I see them raise their unsubstantial arms
 To snatch me from thy rage, or worse, thy love.
 Shadows shall conquer in Palmira's cause.

Mab. [*Apart.*] What terror's this that hangs upon her accents!
 I feel her virtue, though I know her weakness.

Pal. Thou ask'st my love, go seek it in the grave
 Of good Alcanor—Talk'st of grateful minds,
 Bid Zaphna plead for thee, and I may hear thee:
 Till then thou art my scorn—May'st thou, like me,
 Behold thy dearest blood spilt at thy feet,
 Mecca, Medina, all our Asian world,
 Join, join to drive th' impostor from the earth,
 Blush at his chains, and shake them off in vengeance!

Mab. [*Apart.*] Be still, my soul, nor let a woman's rage
 Ruffle thy wonted calm—Spite of thy hate
 Thou'rt lovely still, and charming even in madness.

[*A shout and noise of fighting.*]

My fair, retire; nor let thy gentle soul
Shake with alarms; thou'rt my peculiar care:
I go to quell this trait'rous insurrection,
And will attend thee straight.

Pal. No, tyrant, no;
I'll join my brother, help to head our friends
And urge them on. [*A shout.*
Roll, roll your thunders, Heavens, and aid the storm!
Now hurl your lightning on the guilty head,
And plead the cause of injur'd innocence. [*Exit Pal.*

Enter ALI.

Mab. Whence, Ali, that surprise?

Ali. My royal chief,
The foe prevails—Thy troops, led on by Mirvan,
Are all cut off, and valiant Mirvan's self,
By Zaphna slain, lies welt'ring in his blood:
The guard that to our arms should ope the gates,
Struck with the common frenzy, vow thy ruin,
And death and vengeance is the gen'ral cry.

Mab. Can Ali fear? then, Mahomet, be thyself.

Ali. See, thy few friends, whom wild despair hath arm'd,
(But arm'd in vain) are come to die beside thee.

Mab. Ye heartless traitors! Mahomet alone
Shall be his own defender, and your guard
Against the crowds of Mecca—Follow me.

*Enter ZAPHNA, PALMIRA, and PHARON, with Citizens,
and the body of Alcanor on a bier.*

Ha!

Zaph. See, my friends, where the impostor stands
With head erect, as if he knew not guilt;
As if no tongue spake from Alcanor's wound,
Nor call'd for vengeance on him.

Mab. Impious man!

Is't not enough to have spilt thy parent's blood,
But, with atrocious and blaspheming lips
Dar'st thou arraign the substitute of Heaven?

Zaph. The substitute of Heaven! so is the sword,
The pestilence, the famine; such art thou:
Such are the blessings Heaven has sent to man
By thee, its delegate; nay more, to me.
Oh, he took pains, Palmira, upon us,
Deluded us into such monstrous crimes,
As nature sicken'd at conception of?—
How couldst thou damn us thus?

Mab. Babblers, avaunt!

Zaph. Well thou upbraidst me, for to parley with thee
Half brands me coward. Oh, revenge me, friends!
Revenge Alcanor's massacre; revenge
Palmira's wrongs, and crush the rancorous monster.

Mab. Hear me, ye slaves! born to obey my will.

Pal. Ah, hear him not! fraud dwells upon his tongue.

Zaph. Have at thee, fiend!—Ha! Heaven,

[Zaphna advancing, reels, and reclines on his sword.]

What cloud is this

That thwarts upon my sight? my head grows dizzy;
My joints unloose; sure 'tis the stroke of fate.

Mab. *[Aside.]* The poison works!—then triumph,
Mahomet!

Zaph. Off! off! base lethargy.

Pal. Brother, dismay'd!

Hast thou no power but in a guilty cause,
And only strength to be a parricide?

Zaph. Spare that reproach—Come on—It will not be.

[Hangs down his sword, and reclines on Pharon.]

Some cruel power unnerves my willing arm,
Blasts my resolves, and weighs me down to earth.

Mab. Such be the fate of all who brave our law.
Nature and death have heard my voice, and now
Let Heaven be judge 'twixt Zaphna and myself,
And instant blast the guilty of the two.

Pal. Brother! oh, Zaphna!

Zaph. Zaphna now's no more.

[*Sinking down by Alcanor's body, and leaning on the bier,
Pharon kneeling down with him, and supporting him.*]

Down, down, good Pharon—Thou, poor injur'd corse,
May I embrace thee? Won't thy pallid wound
Purple anew at the unnatural touch,
And ooze fresh calls for vengeance?

Pal. Oh, my brother!

Zaph. In vain's the guiltless meaning of my heart:
High Heaven detests th' involuntary crime,
And dooms for parricide—Then tremble, tyrant!
If the Supreme can punish error thus,
What new-invented tortures must await
Thy soul, grown leprous with such foul offences?
But soft—now fate and nature are at strife——
Sister, farewell! with transport should I quit
This toilsome, perilous, delusive stage,
But that I leave thee on't—leave thee, Palmira,
Expos'd to what is worse than fear can image,
That tyrant's mercy: but I know thee brave—
Know that thou'lt act a part——Look on her, Heaven!
Guide her, and—oh!

[*Dis.*]

Pal. Think not, ye men of Mecca,
This death's inflicted by the hand of Heaven:
'T is he—that viper——

Mab. Know, ye faithless wretches!
'T is mine to deal the bolts of angry Heaven:
Behold them there, and let the wretch who doubts

Tremble at Zaphna's fate, and know that Mahomet
Can read his thoughts, and doom him with a look.
Go, then, and thank your pontiff and your prince
For each day's sun he grants you to behold.
Hence to your temples, and appease my rage.

[*The people go off.*]

Pal. Ah, stay! my brother's murder'd by this tyrant:
By poison not by piety he kills.

Mab. 'Tis done—Thus ever be our law receiv'd! [*Apart.*]
Now, fair Palmira——

Pal. Monster! is it thus
Thou mak'st thyself a god, by added crimes,
And murders justify'd by sacrilege?

Mab. Think, exquisite Palmira! for thy sake——

Pal. Thou'st been the murderer of all my race.
See where Alcanor, see where Zaphna lies:
Do they not call for me too at thy hands?
Oh, that they did!——But I can read thy thoughts;
Palmira's sav'd for something worse than death;
This to prevent——Zaphna, I follow thee.

[*Stabs herself with Zaphna's sword.*]

Mab. What hast thou done!

Pal. A deed of glory, tyrant!
Thou'st left no object worth Palmira's eye,
And when I shut out light I shut out thee—— [*Dis.*]

Mab. Farewell, dear victim of my boundless passion;
The price of treachery, the reward of murder,
Sink with thee to the earth——Oh, justice, justice!
In vain are glory, worship, and dominion.
All conq'ror as I am I am a slave,
And, by the world ador'd, dwell with the damn'd.
My crimes have planted scorpions in my breast——
Here, here, I feel them. 'Tis in vain to brave

The host of terrors that invade my soul :
I might deceive the world, myself I cannot.

Ali. Be calm awhile, my lord ; think what you are.

Mab. Ha ! what am I ? [Turning to the bodies.

Ye breathless family,
Let your loud crying wounds say what I am.
Oh ! snatch me from that sight ; quick, quick transport me
To nature's loneliest mansion, where the sun
Ne'er enter'd, where the sound of human tread
Was never heard——But wherefore ? still I there,
There still shall find myself——Ay, that's the hell——
I'll none on 't.—— [Drawing his sword.

Ali. Heavens ! help, hold him ! [Ali, &c. disarm him.

Mab. Paltry dastards !
You fled the foe but can disarm your master.
Angel of death, whose power I 've long proclaim'd,
Now aid me if thou canst ; now if thou canst
Draw the kind curtain of eternal night
And shroud me from the horrors that beset me.

[Exeunt Mahomet, &c.

Pha. Oh ! what a curse is life, when self conviction
Flings our offences hourly in our face,
And turns existence torturer to itself !
Here let the mad enthusiast turn his eyes,
And see from bigotry what horrors rise,
Here in the blackest colours let him read
That zeal, by craft misled, may act a deed
By which both innocence and virtue bleed. [Exeunt omnes.

EPILOGUE.

Originally spoken by Mr. GARRICK.

*LONG has the shameful licence of the age
With senseless ribaldry disgrac'd the stage ;
So much indecencies have been in vogue
They pleaded custom in an Epilogue,
As if the force of reason was a yoke
So heavy—they must ease it with a joke ;
Disarm the moral of its virtuous way,
Or else the audience go displeas'd away.
How have I blus'd to see a tragic queen
With ill-tim'd mirth, disgrace the well-wrote scene,
From all the sad solemnity of woe
Trip nimbly forth—to ridicule a beau ;
Then, as the loosest airs she had been gleaning,
Coquette the fan, and leer a double meaning !
Shame on those arts that prostitute the bays !
Shame on the bard who this way hopes for praise !
The bold but honest Author of to-night
Disdains to please you if he please not right ;
If, in his well-meant scene you chance to find
Aught to ennoble or enlarge the mind,
If he has found the means, with honest art,
To fix the noblest wishes in the heart,
In softer accents to inform the fair
How bright they look when virtue drops the tear,
Enjoy with friendly welcome the repast,
And keep the heartfelt relish to the last.*

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Act III.

CYMON.

Sal



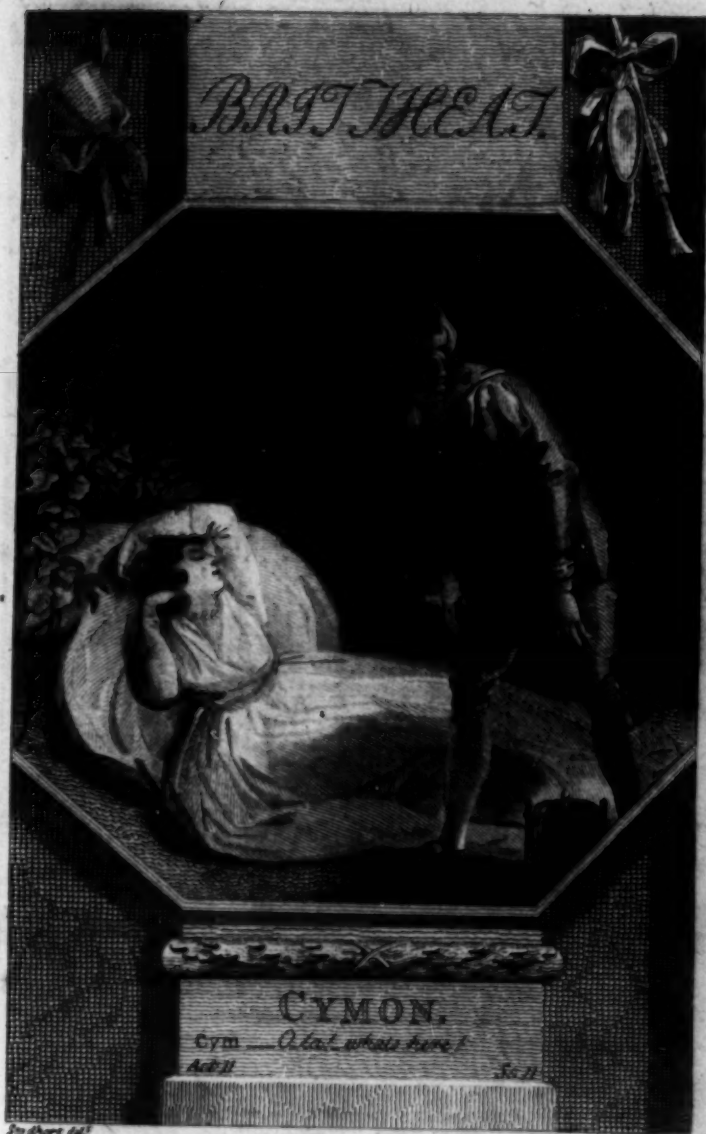
De Wilde pinxit

Long sculpsit

M^r. KELLY as CYMON.

*Oh, the dear, dear Norway, and the
dear, dear giver of it:—*

London, Printed for J. Bell, Smith's Library, Strand, Aug 26 1796



London Printed for J Bell British Library Strand July 20 93

7 JU 52

CYMON.

A
DRAMATIC ROMANCE.

THE MUSIC BY MR. ARNE.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS PERFORMED AT
THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON:

Printed for the Proprietors, under the Direction of JOHN BELL,
British Library, STRAND,
Bookseller to His Royal Highness the PRINCE OF WALES.

M DCC XCV.

CYMON.

DRAMATIC ROMANCE.

THE ACTING PART BY

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION



LONDON.

PROLOGUE.

FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY---Spoken by Mr. KING.

*I COME, obedient at my brethren's call,
From top to bottom, to salute you all :
Warmly to wish, before our piece you view,
A happy year—to you—you—you—and you !*

[Box—Pit—1 Gall.—2 Gall.

*From you the players enjoy and feel it here,
The merry Christmas, and the happy year.*

*There is a good old saying—pray attend it ;
As you begin the year, you'll surely end it :
Should any one this night incline to evil,
He'll play for twelve long months the very devil !
Should any married dame exert her tongue,
She'll sing the Zodiac round, the same sweet song :
And should the husband join his music too,
Why then 't is Cat and Dog, the whole year through.
Ye sons of Law and Physic, for your ease,
Be sure this day you never take your fees :
Can't you refuse ?—then the disease grows strong,
You'll have two itching palms—Lord knows how long !
Writers of news by this strange fate are bound,
They fib to-day, and fib the whole year round.
You wits assembled here, both great and small,
Set not this night afloat your critic gall ;
If you should snarl, and not incline to laughter,
What sweet companions for a twelvemonth after !*

*You must be muzzled for this night at least ;
Our author has a right this day to feast.
He has not touch'd one bit as yet—Remember
'Tis a long Fast from now to next December,
'Tis Holiday ! you are our patrons now ;*

[To the Upper Gallery.

*If you but grin, the critics won't Bow, wow.
As for the plot, wit, humour, language—I
Beg you such trifles kindly to pass by ;
The most essential part, which something means,
As dresses, dances, sinkings, flyings, scenes—
They'll make you stare—nay, there's such a thing,
Will make you stare still more !—for I must sing :
And should your taste, and ears, be over nice,
Alas ! you'll spoil my singing in a trice.
If you should growl, my notes will alter soon,
I can't be in—if you are out of tune !
Permit my fears your favour to bespeak,
My part's a strong one, and poor I but weak.*

[Alluding to his late accident.

*If you but smile, I'm firm, if frown, I stumble—
Scarce well of one, spare me a second tumble.*

Dramatis Personæ.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

MERLIN,	-	-	-	Mr. Richardson.
CYMON,	-	-	-	Mr. Incedon.
DORUS,	-	-	-	Mr. Quick.
LINCO,	-	-	-	Mr. Fawcett.
DAMON,	-	-	-	Mr. Farley.
DORILAS,	-	-	-	Mr. Ledger.
HYMEN,	-	-	-	Mr. Simmons.

Women.

CUPID,	-	-	-	Miss Standing.
URGANDA,	-	-	-	Mrs. Fawcett.
SYLVIA,	-	-	-	Mrs. Mountain.
FATIMA,	-	-	-	Mrs. Martyr.
1st Shepherdess,	-	-	-	Miss Stuart.
2d Shepherdess,	-	-	-	Miss Leserve.
DORCAS,	-	-	-	Mr. Munden.

Demons of Revenge, Mr. Cubitt, &c. &c.

Knights, Shepherds, &c. &c. &c.

SCENE, Arcadia.



CYMON.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Urganda's Palace. Enter MERLIN and URGANDA.

BUT hear me, Merlin, I beseech you hear me.

Mer. Hear you! I have heard you—for years have heard your vows, your protestations—Have you not allur'd my affections by every female art? and when I thought that my unalterable passion was to be rewarded for its constancy—What have you done?—Why, like mere mortal woman, in the true spirit of frailty, have given up me and my hopes—for what?—a boy, an idiot.

Urg. Even this I can bear from Merlin.

Mer. You have injur'd me, and must bear more.

Urg. I'll repair that injury.

Mer. Then send back your fav'rite Cymon to his disconsolate friends.

Urg. How can you imagine that such a poor ignorant object as Cymon is can have any charms for me!

Mer. Ignorance, no more than profligacy, is excluded from female favour; the success of rakes and fools is a sufficient warning to us, could we be wise enough to take it.

Urg. You mistake me, Merlin; pity for Cymon's state of mind, and friendship for his father, have induced me to endeavour at his cure.

Mer. False, prevaricating Urganda! Love was your inducement. Have you not stolen the prince from his royal father, and detained him here by your power, while a hundred knights are in search after him? Does not every thing about you prove the consequence of your want of honour and faith to me? Were you not plac'd on this happy spot of Arcadia, to be the guardian of its peace and innocence? and have not the Arcadians lived for ages the envy of less happy, because less virtuous people?

Urg. Let me beseech you, Merlin, spare my shame.

Mer. And are they not at last, by your example, sunk from the state of happiness and tranquillity to that of care, vice, and folly! Their once happy lives are now embittered with envy, passion, vanity, selfishness, and inconstancy—and who are they to curse for this change?—Urganda, the false, the lost Urganda.

AIR.

*If pure are the springs of the fountain,
As purely the river will flow,
If noxious the stream from the mountain,
It poisons the valley below :
So of vice, or of virtue, possess,
The throne makes the nation,
Through every gradation,
Or wretched, or blest.*

Urg. Let us talk calmly of this matter.

Mer. I'll converse with you no more—because I will be no more deceived: I cannot hate you, though I shun you—Yet, in my misery, I have this consolation, that the pangs of my jealousy are at least equalled by the torments of your fruitless passion.

Still wish and sigh, and wish again,
Love is dethron'd, revenge shall reign :
Still shall my power your arts confound,
And Cymon's cure shall be Urganda's wound.

[Exit Merlin.

Urg. ' And Cymon's cure shall be Urganda's wound !'
What mystery is couch'd in these words ?——What can he mean ?

Enter FATIMA, looking after MERLIN.

Fati. I'll tell you, madam, when he is out of hearing.—
He means mischief, and terrible mischief too; no less, I believe, than ravishing you, and cutting my tongue out—I wish we were out of his clutches.

Urg. Do n't fear, Fatima.

Fati. I can't help it, he has great power, and is mischievously angry.

Urg. Here is your protection. [*Shewing her wand.*] My power is at least equal to his——[*Muses.*] ' And Cymon's cure shall be Urganda's wound !'

Fati. Do n't trouble your head with these odd ends of verses, which were spoke in a passion; or, perhaps for the rhyme's sake.——Think a little to clear us from this old mischief-making conjurer——What will you do, madam ?

Urg. What can I do, Fatima ?

Fati. You might very easily settle matters with him, if you could as easily settle them with yourself.

Urg. Tell me how ?

Fati. Marry Merlin, and send away the young fellow. [*Urganda shakes her head.*] I thought so——we are all alike, and that folly of our's of preferring two-and-twenty to two-and-forty, runs through the whole sex of us——but,

before matters grow worse, give me leave to reason a little with you, madam.

Urg. I am in love, Fatima.

[*Sighing.*]

Fati. And poor reason may stay at home——me exactly!——Ay, ay, we are all alike——but with this difference, madam——your passion is surely a strange one——you have stolen away this young man; who, bating his youth and figure, has not one single circumstance to create affection about him: he is half an idiot, madam, which is no great compliment to your wisdom, your beauty, or your power.

Urg. I despise them all——for they can neither relieve my passion, or create one where I would have them.

AIR.

What is knowledge, and beauty, and power,

Or what is my magical art?

Can I for a day, for an hour,

Have beauty to make the youth kind,

Have power o'er his mind,

Or knowledge to warm his cold heart?

O! no—a weak boy all my magic disarms,

And I sigh all the day with my power and my charms.

Fati. Sigh all the day!—More shame for you, madam—Cymon is incapable of being touch'd with any thing; nothing gives him pleasure, but twirling his cap, and hunting butterflies—he'll make a sad lover, indeed, madam——

Urg. I can wait with patience for the recovery of his understanding; it begins to dawn already.

Fati. Where, pray?

Urg. In his eyes.

Fati. Eyes!—Ha, ha, ha, ha!—Love has none, madam—the heart only sees on these occasions—Cymon was born a

fool—and his eyes will never look as you would have them, take my word for it.

Urg. Don't make me despair, Fatima.

Fati. Don't lose your time then; 't is the business of beauty to make fools, and not cure them—Even I, poor I, could have made twenty fools of wise men in half the time that you have been endeavouring to make your fool sensible—O! 't is a sad way of spending one's time.

Urg. Hold your tongue, Fatima—my passion is too serious to be jested with.

Fati. Far gone indeed, madam—and yonder goes the precious object of it.

[*Looking out.*]

Urg. He seems melancholy: what's the matter with him?

Fati. He's a fool, or he might make himself very merry among us—I'll leave you to make the most of him.

Urg. Stay, Fatima—and help me to divert him.

Fati. A sad time, when a lady must call in help to divert her gallant!—but I'm at your service.

AIR.

*Hitber all my spirits bend,
With your magic powers attend,
Chase the mists that cloud his mind:
Music, melt the frozen boy,
Raise his soul to love and joy;
Dullness makes the heart unkind.*

Enter CYMON, melancholy.

Cym. What do you sing for?—Heigho! [Sighing.]

Fati. What's the matter, young gentleman?

Cym. Heigho!

Urg. Are you not well, Cymon!

Cym. Yes, I am very well.

Urg. Why do you sigh then?

Cym. Eh!

[*Looks foolishly.*]

Fati. Do you see it in his eyes, now, madam?

Urg. Pr'ythee be quiet—What is it you want? tell me,

Cymon—Tell me your wishes, and you shall have them.

Cym. Shall I?

Urg. Yes, indeed, *Cymon*.

Fati. Now for it.

Cym. I wish—heigho!

Urg. These sighs must mean something. [*Aside to Fati.*]

Fati. I wish you joy, then; find it out, madam.

Urg. What do you sigh for?

Cym. I want—

[*Sighs.*]

Urg. What, what, my sweet creature?

[*Eagerly.*]

Cym. To go away.

Fati. O la!—the meaning's out.

Urg. What, would you leave me then?

Cym. Yes.

Urg. Why would you leave me?

Cym. I do n't know.

Urg. Where would you go?

Cym. Any where.

Urg. Had you rather go any where than stay with me?

Cym. I had rather go any where than stay with any body.

Urg. But you can't love me if you would leave me, *Cymon*.

Cym. Love you! what's that?

Urg. Do you feel nothing here? In your heart, *Cymon*?

Cym. Yes, I do.

Urg. What is it?

Cym. I do n't know.

[*Sighs.*]

Urg. That's a sigh, *Cymon*—am I the cause of it?

Cym. Yes, indeed you are.

Urg. Then I am blest!

Fati. Poor lady!

Urg. But how do I cause it?

Cym. You won't let me go away.

Fati. Poor lady!

[*Aside.*

Urg. Will you love me if I let you go?

Cym. Any thing if you'll let me go—pray let me go.

Urg. You can't love me and go too.

Cym. Let me try.

Fati. I'm out of all patience—what the deuce would you have, young gentleman? Had you one grain of understanding, or a spark of sensibility in you, you would know and feel yourself to be the happiest of mortals.

Cym. I had rather go for all that.

Fati. The picture of the whole sex! Oh, madam—fondness will never do, a little coquetry is the thing; I bait my hook with nothing else; and I always catch fish.

[*Aside to Urganda.*

Urg. What! had you rather go away than live here in splendor, be caress'd by me, and have all your commands obey'd?

Cym. All my commands obey'd?

Urg. Yes, my dear Cymon; give me your affections, and I will give you my power—you shall be lord of me and mine.

Cym. O la!

Fati. O, the fool!

Urg. I will shew him my power, and captivate his heart through his senses.

Fati. You'll throw away your powder and shot.

SCENE II.

Urganda waves her Wand, and the Stage changes to a magnificent Garden. CUPID and the Loves descend.

AIR.—CUPID.

O! why will you call me again,
 'Tis in vain, 't is in vain;
 The powers of a god
 Cannot quicken this clod,
 Alas!—it is labour in vain:
 O, Venus! my mother, some new object give her!
 This blunts all my arrows, and empties my quiver.

[A dance by Cupid and followers

[During the Entertainments of Singing and Dancing, Cymon at first stares about him, then grows inattentive, and at last falls asleep.

Urg. Look, Fatima, nothing can affect his insensibility—and yet what a beautiful simplicity!

Fati. Turn him out among the sheep, madam, and think no more of him—'T is all labour in vain, as the song says, I assure you.

Urg. Cymon, Cymon! what, are you dead to these entertainments?

Cym. Dead! I hope not.

[Starts.

Urg. How can you be so unmov'd?

Cym. They tir'd me so, that I wish'd them a good night, and went to sleep—but where are they?

Urg. They are gone, Cymon.

Cym. Then let me go too.

[Going.

Fati. The old story!

Urg. Whither would you go?—Tell me, and I'll go with you, my sweet youth.

Cym. No, I'll go by myself.

Urg. And so you shall; but where?

Cym. Into the fields.

Urg. But is not this garden pleasanter than the fields, my palace than cottages, and my company more agreeable to you than the shepherds?

Cym. Why, how can I tell till I try? you won't let me choose.

AIR.—CYMON.

*You gave me last week a young linnet,
Shut up in a fine golden cage;
Yet how sad the poor thing was within it,
Oh, how it did flutter and rage!
Then he mop'd and he pin'd,
That his wings were confin'd,
Till I open'd the door of his den;
Then so merry was he,
And because he was free,
He came to his cage back again.*

And so should I too if you would let me go.

Urg. And would you return to me again?

Cym. Yes, I would—I have no where else to go.

Fati. Let him have his humour—when he is not confin'd, and is seemingly disregarded, you may have him, and mould him as you please.—'Tis a receipt for the whole sex.

Urg. I'll follow your advice—Well, Cymon, you shall go wherever you please, and for as long as you please.

Cym. O la! and I'll bring you a bird's nest, and some cowslips—and shall I let my linnet out too?

Fati. O, ay, pretty creatures; pray let 'em go together.

Urg. And take this, Cymon, wear it for my sake, and don't forget me. [*Gives him a nosegay.*] Though it won't give passion it will increase it, if he should think kindly of me, and absence may befriend me. [*Aside.*] Go, Cymon, take your companion, and be happier than I can make you.

Cym. Then I'm out of my cage, and shall mope no longer. [*Overjoyed.*

Urg. His transports distract me!—I must retire to conceal my uneasiness. [*Retires.*

Fati. And I'll open the gate to the prisoners. [*Exit.*

Cym. And I'll fetch my bird, and we'll fly away together.

AIR.

Oh liberty, liberty!

Dear happy liberty!

Nothing's like thee!

So merry are we,

My linnet and I,

From prison we're free,

Away we will fly,

To liberty, liberty,

Dear happy liberty!

Nothing's like thee.

[*Exit.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Rural Prospect. Enter two Shepherdesses.

First Shepherdess.

WHAT, to be left and forsaken! and 'see the false fellow make the same vows to another, almost before my face! I can't bear it, and I won't!

2d *Shep.* Why look ye, sister, I am as little inclin'd to bear these things as yourself; and if my swain had been faithless too I should have been vex'd at it, to be sure; but how can you help yourself.

1st *Shep.* I have not thought of that; I only feel I can't bear it; and as to the won't, I must trust in a little mischief of my own to bring it about.—O, that I had the power of our enchantress yonder! I would play the devil with them all.

2d *Shep.* And yet folks say, she has no power in love-matters; you know, notwithstanding her charms, and her spirits, she is in love with a fool, and has not wit enough to make him return it.

1st *Shep.* No matter for that; if I could not make folks love me, I would make them miserable, and that 's the next pleasure to it.

2d *Shep.* And yet to do justice to her who makes all this disturbance among you, she does not in the least encourage the shepherds, and she can't help their falling in love with her.

1st *Shep.* May be so, nor can I help hating and detesting her, because they do fall in love with her.—Sylvia's good qualities cannot excuse her to me; my quarrel to her is, that all the young fellows follow her, not because she does not follow the young fellows.

2d *Shep.* Why, but really now, sister, 't is a little hard, that a girl, who has beauty to get lovers, or merit enough to keep them, should be hated for her good qualities. [*Affectedly.*]

1st *Shep.* Marry come up, my insulting sister: because you think your shepherd constant, you have no feeling for the false heartedness of mine.—But do n't be too vain with your success? my Dorilas is made of the same stuff with your Damon; and I can't for the life of me see that you have any particular security for your fool, more than I had for mine.

2d *Shep.* Why are you so angry, my dear sister?—I am

not Sylvia, and to oblige you, I will abuse her wherever I go, and whenever you please: I think she is a most provoking creature, and I wish she was out of the country with all my soul.

1st *Shep.* And so she ought to be. She has no business here with her good qualities. Nobody knows who she is, or whence she came.—She was left here with old Dorcas: but how, or by whom, or for what, except to make mischief among us, I know not.—There is some mystery about her, and I'll find it out.

2d *Shep.* But will your quarrelling with her bring back your sweetheart?

1st *Shep.* No matter for that—when the heart is overloaded, any vent is a relief to it; and that of the tongue is always the readiest and most natural—So if you won't help me to find her, you may stay where you will.

Linco. [*Singing without.*]

Care flies from the lad that is merry.

2d *Shep.* Here comes the merry Linco, who never knew care, or felt sorrow.—If you can bear his laughing at your griefs, or singing away his own, you may get some information from him.

Enter LINCO, singing.

Lin. What, my girls of ten thousand! I was this moment defying love and all his mischief, and you are sent in the nick by him to try my courage; but I'm above temptation, or below it—I duck down, and all his arrows fly over me.

AIR.

*Care flies from the lad that is merry,
Whose heart is as sound,
And cheeks are as round,
As round and as red as a cherry.*

1st *Shep.* What, are you always thus?

Lin. Ay, or Heaven help me!—What, would you have me do as you do—walking with your arms across, thus—heigh-hoing by the brook side among the willows.—Oh! fye for shame, lasses! young and handsome, and sighing after one fellow a piece, when you should have a hundred in a drove, following you like—like—you shall have the simile another time.

2d *Shep.* No, pr'y thee, Linco, give it us now.

Lin. You shall have it—or, what's better, I'll tell you what you are not like; you are not like our shepherdess Sylvia—she's so cold, and so coy, that she flies from her lovers, but is never without a score of them: you are always running after the fellows, and yet are always alone; a very great difference, let me tell you—frost and fire—that's all.

2d *Shep.* Don't imagine that I am in the pining condition my poor sister is—I am as happy as she is miserable.

Lin. Good lack, I'm sorry for it.

2d *Shep.* What, sorry that I am happy?

Lin. O! no, prodigious glad.

1st *Shep.* That I am miserable?

Lin. No, no: prodigious sorry for that, and prodigious glad of the other.

1st *Shep.* Be my friend, Linco, and I'll confess my folly to you.

Lin. Don't trouble yourself; 'tis plain enough to be seen; but I'll give you a receipt for it without fee or reward—there's friendship for you.

1st *Shep.* Pr'y thee be serious a little.

Lin. No, Heaven forbid!—If I am serious 'tis all over with me—I should soon change my roses for your lilies.

2d *Shep.* Don't be impudent, Linco—but give us your receipt.

AIR.—LINCO.

*I laugh, and I sing,
I am blithsome and free,
The rogue's little sting
It can never reach me:
For with fal, la, la, la!
And ba, ba, ba, ba!
It can never reach me.*

*My skin is so tough,
Or so blinking is he,
He can't pierce my buff,
Or he misses poor me.
For with fal, la, la, la!
And ba, ba, ba, ba!
He misses poor me.*

*O, never be dull,
By the sad willow tree:
Of mirth be brimful,
And run over like me.
For with fal, la, la, la!
And ba, ba, ba, ba!
Run over like me.*

1st Shep. It won't do!

Lin. Then you are far gone, indeed.

1st Shep. And as I can't cure my love I'll revenge it.

Lin. But how, how, shepherdess?

1st Shep. I'll tear Sylvia's eyes out.

Lin. That's your only way—for you'll give your nails a feast, and prevent mischief for the future—Oh! tear her eyes out by all means.

2d *Shep.* How can you laugh, Linco, at my sister in her condition?

Lin. I must laugh at something; shall I be merry with you?

2d *Shep.* Shepherd, the happy can bear to be laugh'd at.

Lin. Then Sylvia might take your shepherd without a sigh, though your sister would tear her eyes out.

2d *Shep.* My shepherd! what does the fool mean?

1st *Shep.* Her shepherd! pray tell us, Linco. [*Eagerly.*]

Lin. 'Tis no secret, I suppose—I only met Damon and Sylvia together.

2d *Shep.* What, my Damon?

Lin. Your Damon that was, and that would be Sylvia's Damon if she would accept of him.

2d *Shep.* Her Damon!—I'll make her to know—a wicked slut!—a vile fellow!—Come, sister, I am ready to go with you—we'll give her her own. If our old governor continues to cast a sheep's eye at me, I'll have her turned out of Arcadia, I warrant you.

1st *Shep.* This is some comfort, however; ha, ha, ha!

2d *Shep.* Very well, sister! you may laugh if you please—but perhaps it is too soon; Linco may be mistaken; it may be your Dorilas that was with her.

Lin. And your Damon too, and Strephon, and Colin, and Alexis, and Egon, and Corydon, and every fool of the parish but Linco, and he sticks to

Fal, la, la, la!

And ha, ha, ha, ha!

1st *Shep.* I can't bear to see him so merry when I am so miserable. [*Going.*]

2d *Shep.* There is some satisfaction in seeing one's sister as miserable as one's self. [*Going.*]

Lin. One word more, lasses, if you please; I see you are

both brim-full of wrath, and will certainly scratch one another, if you don't find Sylvia—now hear but another song, and if it does not cool you I'll shew you where the enemy lies, and you shall draw your tongues upon her immediately.

AIR.—LINCO.

*If you make it your plan,
To love but one man,
By one you are surely betray'd :
Should he prove untrue,
Oh ! what can you do ?
Alas, you must die an old maid.
And you too must die an old maid.*

*Would you ne'er take a sup,
But out of one cup,
And it proves brittle ware you are curst :
If down it should tip,
Or through your hand slip,
O, how would you then quench your thirst ?
O, how, &c.*

*If your palate to hit,
You choose but one bit,
And that dainty tit-bit should not keep :
Then restless you lie,
Pout, whimper, and cry,
And go without supper to sleep.
And go, &c.*

*As your shepherds have chose
Two strings to their bows,
Shall one for each female suffice ?*

Take two, three, or four,

Like me, take a score,

And then you'll be merry and wise.

And then you'll be merry and wise.

[Exeunt severally.]

SCENE II.

Changes to a Rural Prospect. SYLVIA is discovered lying on a bank, with a Basket of Flowers. Enter MERLIN.

Mer. My art succeeds—which hither has convey'd,
To catch the eye of Cymon, this sweet maid.
Her charms shall clear the mists which cloud his mind,
And make him warm, and sensible, and kind;
Her yet cold heart with passion's sighs shall move,
Melt as he melts, and give him love for love.
This magic touch shall to these flowers impart

[Touches the basket of flowers with his wand.]

A power, when beauty gains, to fix the heart;

A power, the false enchantress shall confound;

'And Cymon's cure shall be Urganda's wound.' [Exit.]

Enter CYMON, with his bird.

Cym. Away, prisoner, and make yourself merry. [*Bird flies.*] Ay, ay, I knew how it would be with you—much good may it do you, Bob—What a sweet place this is! Hills, and greens, and rocks, and trees, and water, and sun, and birds!—Dear me, 't is just as if I had never seen it before! [*Whistles about till he sees Sylvia, then stops, and sinks his whistling by degrees, with a look and attitude of foolish astonishment.*] O, la!—what's here!—'T is something dropp'd from the Heavens sure, and yet 't is like a woman

too!—Bless me! is it alive! [*Sighs.*] It can't be dead, for its cheeks are as red as a rose, and it moves about the heart of it. I begin to feel something strange here. [*Lays his hand on his heart and sighs.*] I don't know what's the matter with me—I wish it would wake, that I might see its eyes.—If it should look gentle, and smile upon me, I should be glad to play with it.—Ay, ay, there's something now in my breast that they told me of—It feels oddly to me—and yet I don't dislike it.

AIR.—CYMON.

All amaze!
Wonder, praise.
Here for ever could I gaze!
Creep still near it, [Advancing.
Yet I fear it, [Retiring.
I can neither stay nor go:
Can't forsake it, [Advancing.
Dare not wake it, [Retiring.
Shall I touch it?—no, no, no! [Advances and retires.

“Cymon, sure thou art possess,
 “Something's got into thy breast,
 “Gently stealing,
 “Strangely feeling,
 “And my heart is panting so.
 “ I'm sad and merry, sick and well,
 “What it is I cannot tell,
 “Makes me thus—heigho! heigho!

I am glad I came abroad!—I have not been so glad ever since I can remember—but, perhaps it may be angry with me; I can't help it if it is—I had rather see her angry with

me than Urganda smile upon me.—Stay, stay. [*Sylvia stirs.*]
 —La, what a pretty foot it has! [*Cymon retires.*]

Sylvia raising herself from the bank.

AIR.—SYLVIA.

*Yet awhile, sweet sleep, deceive me,
 Fold me in thy downy arms,
 Let not care awake to grieve me,
 Lull it with thy potent charms.*

*I, a turtle, doom'd to stray,
 Quitting young the parent's nest,
 Find each bird a bird of prey;
 Sorrow knows no where to rest.*

[*Sylvia sees Cymon with emotion, while he gazes strongly on her, and retires gently, pulling off his cap.*]

Syl. [*Confused.*] Who's that?

Cym. 'Tis I.

[*Bowing and hesitating*]

Syl. What's your name?

Cym. Cymon.

Syl. What do you want, young man?

Cym. Nothing, young woman.

Syl. What are you doing there?

Cym. Looking at you there.

Syl. What a pretty creature it is!

[*Aside.*]

Cym. What eyes it has!

[*Aside.*]

Syl. You don't intend me any harm?

Cym. Not I, indeed!—I wish you don't do me some.—

Are you a fairy, pray?

Syl. No—I am a poor harmless shepherdess.

Cym. I don't know that—You have bewitched me, I believe.

Syl. Indeed I have not; and if it was in my power to harm you, I'm sure 't is not in my inclination.

Cym. I'm sure I would trust you to do any thing with me.

Syl. Would you? [Sighs.]

Cym. Yes, indeed I would. [Sighs.]

Syl. Why do you look so at me?

Cym. Why do you look so at me?

Syl. I can't help it. [Sighs.]

Cym. Nor I neither. [Sighs.] I wish you'd speak to me, and look at me, as Urganda does.

Syl. What, the enchantress?—Do you belong to her?

Cym. I had rather belong to you—I would not desire to go abroad if I did.

Syl. Does Urganda love you?

Cym. So she says.

Syl. I'm sorry for it.

Cym. Why are you sorry, pray?

Syl. I shall never see you again—I wish I had not seen you now.

Cym. If you did but wish as I do, all the enchantresses in the world could not hinder us from seeing one another.

Syl. Do you love Urganda?

Cym. Do you love the shepherds?

Syl. I did not know what love was this morning.

Cym. Nor I, 'till this afternoon.—Who taught you, pray?

Syl. Who taught you?

Cym. [Bashful.] You.

Syl. [Blushing.] You.

Cym. You could teach me any thing, if I was to live with you—I should not be call'd Simple Cymon any more.

Syl. Nor I hard-hearted Sylvia!

Cym. Sylvia!—what a sweet name!—I could speak it for ever! [Transported.]—Sylvia!

Syl. I can never forget that of Cymon—though Cymon may forget me. [Sighs.

Cym. Never, never, my sweet Sylvia.

[Falls on his knees and kisses her hands.

Syl. We shall be seen and separated for ever! Pray let me go—we are undone if we are seen—I must go—I am all over in a flutter!

Cym. When shall I see you again?—In half an hour?

Syl. Half an hour! that will be too soon—No, no, it must be—three quarters of an hour.

Cym. And where, my sweet Sylvia?

Syl. Any where, my sweet Cymon?

Cym. In the grove by the river there.

Syl. And you shall take this to remember it. [Gives him the nosegay enchanted by Merlin. I wish it were a kingdom, I would give it you, and a queen along with it.

Cym. How my heart is transported!—and here is one for you too; which is of no value to me, unless you will receive it—take it, my sweet Sylvia. [Gives her Urganda's nosegay.

DUET.

Syl. O, take this nosegay, gentle youth,

Cym. And you, sweet maid, take mine;

Syl. Unlike these flowers be thy fair truth;

Cym. Unlike these flowers be thine.

These changing soon,

Will soon decay;

Be sweet till noon,

Then pass away.

Fair for a time their transient charms appear:

But, truth unchang'd, shall bloom for ever here.

[Each pressing their hearts and exeunt.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Before Urganda's Palace. Enter URGANDA and FATIMA.

Urganda.

Is he not return'd yet, Fatima?

Fati. He has no feelings but those of hunger; when that pinches him, he'll return to be fed, like other animals.

Urg. Indeed, Fatima, his insensibility astonishes and distracts me.—I have exhausted all my arts to overcome it; I have run all dangers to make an impression upon him; and, instead of finding my passion in the least abated by his ingratitude, I am only a greater slave to my weakness, and more incapable of relief.

Fati. Why then I may as well hold my tongue—but before I would waste all the prime of my womanhood in playing such a losing game, I would—but I see you don't mind me, madam, and therefore I'll say no more—I know the consequence, and must submit.

Urg. What can I do in my situation?

Fati. What you ought to do—and you belye your beauty and understanding by not doing it—'t is a fashionable scheme.

Urg. Explain yourself.

Fati. To secure my tongue, and your honour (for Merlin will have you by hook or by crook), marry him directly—it will prevent mischief at least—so much for prudence. During your honey-moon I will hide the young gentleman, and, if he has any tinder in him, kindle him up for you. If your husband should be tired of you, as ten to one he will, I'll step in his way, he may be glad of the change, and in

return, I'll restore young Simplicity to you. That's what I call a fashionable scheme.

Urg. I can't bear trifling at this time—you'll make me angry with you—But see where Cymon approaches—he seems transported—Look, look, Fatima! He is kissing and embracing my nosegay—it has had the desired effect, and I am happy—we'll be invisible, that I may observe his transports.

[*Urganda waves her wand and retires with Fatima.*]

Enter CYMON, bugging a Nosegay.

Cym. Oh my dear, sweet, charming nosegay!—To see thee, to smell thee, and to taste thee, [*Kisses it.*] will make Urganda and her garden delightful to me. [*Kisses it.*]

Fati. What does he say?

Urg. Hush, hush!—all transport, and about me: What a change is this?

Cym. With this I can want for nothing—I possess every thing with this. My mind and heart are expanded: I feel—I know not what. Every thought that delights, and every passion that transports, gather, like so many bees, about this treasure of sweetness. Oh, the dear, dear nosegay, and the dear, dear giver of it!

Urg. The dear, dear giver. Mind that, Fatima! What heavenly eloquence! Here's a change of heart and mind!—heigho!—

Fati. I'm all amazement!—in a dream!—but is that your nosegay?

Urg. Mine! how can you doubt it?

Fati. Nay, I'm near sighted.

Cym. She has not a beauty that is not brought to mind by these flowers. This is the colour of her hair—this of her skin—this of her cheeks—this of her eyes—this of her lips

—sweet, sweet—and those rose-buds—Oh! I shall go out of my wits with pleasure!

Fati. 'Tis pity to lose 'em the moment you have found 'em.—

Urg. O, Fatima! I never was proud of my power, or vain of my beauty, till this transporting moment.

Cym. Where shall I put it? Where shall I conceal it from every body? I'll keep it in my bosom, next my heart, all the day; and at night, I will put it upon my pillow, and talk to it—and sigh to it—and swear to it—and sleep by it—and kiss it for ever and ever!

AIR.

*What exquisite pleasure!
This sweet treasure
From me they shall never
Sever;
In thee, in thee,
My charmer I see:
I'll sigh and caress thee,
I'll kiss thee and press thee,
Thus, thus, to my bosom for ever and ever.*

Urganda and Fatima come forward, Cymon starts at seeing Urganda, and puts the Nosegay in his bosom with great confusion.

Urg. [*Smiling.*] Pray, what is that you would kiss, and press to your bosom for ever and ever?

Cym. Nothing but the end of an old song the shepherds taught me, 'I'll sigh and caress thee, I'll kiss thee and press thee,'—that's all— [*Pretends to sing.*]

Fati. Upon my word a very hopeful youth indeed, and much improved in his singing—What think you now?

[*Aside to Urganda.*]

Urg. Nothing but his bashfulness struggling with his passion. What was that you was talking to?

Cym. Myself, to be sure, I had nothing else to talk to.

Urg. Yes, but you have, Cymon—don't be asham'd of what you ought to be proud of—there is something in your bosom, next your heart.

Cym. Yes, so there is.

Urg. What is it, Cymon?

[*Smiling.*

Fati. Now his modesty is giving way; we shall have him at last.

[*Aside.*

Cym. Nothing but a nosegay.

Urg. That which I gave you?—let me see it.

Cym. What! give a thing, and take it away again?

Urg. I would not take it away for the world.

Cym. Nor would I give it you, for a hundred worlds.

Fati. See it by all means, madam.—I have my reasons.

[*Aside to Urganda.*

Urg. I must see it, Cymon, and therefore no delay—you cannot have the love you seem'd to have but now, and refuse me.

Cym. O, but I can, and for that reason.

Urg. Don't provoke me—I will see it, or shut you up for ever.

Cym. What a stir is here about nothing! Now are you satisfied?

[*He holds the Nosegay at a distance—Urganda and Fatima look at one another with surprize.*

Fati. I was right.

Urg. And I am miserable!

Cym. Have you seen it enough?

Urg. That is not mine, Cymon.

Cym. No—'tis mine.

Urg. Who gave it you?

Cym. A person.

Urg. What person—male or female?

Cym. La! how can I tell?

Urg. I must dissemble. [*Aside.*] Look 'e, Cymon; I did but sport with you—the nosegay was your own, and you had a right to give it away, or throw it away.

Cym. Indeed, but I did not—I only gave it for this—which, as it is so much finer and sweeter, I thought it would not vex you

Urg. Heigho!

[*Aside.*

Fati. Vex her! O, not in the least—But you should not have given away her present to a vulgar creature.

Cym. How dare you talk to me so? I would have you to know, she is neither ugly nor vulgar.

Fati. Oh, she!—your humble servant, young Simplicity! La, how can you tell whether it is male or female!

[*Mimicks Cymon, who seems confounded.*

Urg. Do n't mind her impertinence, Cymon—I give you leave to follow your own inclination. I brought you hither for your pleasure, indulge yourself in every thing you like—and be as happy as following your desires can make you.

Cym. Then I am happy, indeed—thank you, lady, you have made me quite another creature! I'm out of my wits with joy—I may follow my inclinations—thank you, and thank you, and thank you again.

' I'll sigh and caress thee,

' I'll kiss thee and press thee,

' Thus, thus, to my bosom for ever and ever.'

[*Exit Cymon singing.*

Fati. You are a philosopher, indeed!

Urg. A female one, Fatima: I have hid the most racking jealousy under this false appearance, in order to deceive him—I shall by this means discover the cause of his joy, and

my misery ; and, when that is known, you shall see whether I am most of a woman or a philosopher.

Fati. I'll lay ten to one of the woman in matters of this nature.

Urg. Let him have liberty to go wherever he pleases—I will have him watch'd ; that office be your's, my faithful Fatima—about it instantly—don't lose sight of him—no reply—not a word more.

Fati. That's very hard—but I'm gone. [Exit.

Urg. When I have discover'd the object of his present transports I will make her more wretched than any of her sex—except myself.

AIR.

Hence every hope, and ev'ry fear !

Awake, awake, my power and pride,

Let Jealousy, stern Jealousy appear !

With Vengeance at her side !

Who scorns my charms, my power shall prove,

Revenge succeeds to slighted love !

Revenge !—But oh, my sighing heart

With rebel Love takes part ;

Now pants again with all her fears,

And drowns her rage in tears.

[Exit.

SCENE II.

Dorcas's Cottage. SYLVIA at the door, with Cymon's Nose-gay in her hand.

AIR.

These flowers, like our hearts, are united in one,

And are bound up so fast, that they can't be undone ;

*So well are they blended, so beauteous to sight,
There springs from their union a tenfold delight;
Nor poison, nor weed here, our passion to warn;
But sweet without brier, the rose without thorn.*

The more I look upon this nosegay, the more I feel Cymon in my heart and mind—Ever since I have seen him, heard his vows, and received this nosegay from him, I am in continual agitation, and cannot rest a moment. I wander without knowing where—I speak without knowing to whom—and I look without knowing at what—Heigho! how my poor heart flutters in my breast! Now I dread to lose him, and now again I think him mine for ever!

AIR.

*O, why should we sorrow, who never knew sin!
Let smiles of content shew our rapture within:
This love has so rais'd me, I now tread in air!
He's sure sent from Heaven to lighten my care!*

*Each shepherdess views me with scorn and disdain,
Each shepherd pursues me, but all is in vain:
No more will I sorrow, no longer despair,
He's sure sent from Heaven to lighten my care!*

[Linco is seen listening to her singing.]

Lin. If you were as wicked, shepherdess, as you are innocent, that voice of your's would corrupt justice herself, unless she was deaf as well as blind.

Syl. I hope you did not overhear me, Linco?

Lin. O, but I did though—and, notwithstanding I come as the deputy of a deputy governor, to bring you before my principal, for some complaints made against you by a cer-

tain shepherdess, I will stand your friend, though I lose my place for it—there are not many such friends, shepherdess.

Syl. What have I done to the shepherdesses that they persecute me so?

Lin. You are much too handsome, which is a crime the best of 'em can't forgive you.

Syl. I'll trust myself with you, and face my enemies.

[*As they are going, Dorcas call from the cottage.*]

Dor. Where are you going, child? Who is that with you, Sylvia?

Lin. Now shall we be stopp'd by this good old woman, who will know all—and can scarce hear any thing.

Dor. [*Coming forward.*] I'll see who you have with you.

Lin. 'Tis I, dame, your kinsman Linco.

[*Speaks loud in her ear.*]

Dor. O, it is you, honest Linco! [*Takes his hand.*] Well, what's to do now?

Lin. The governor desires to speak with Sylvia; a friendly enquiry, that's all.

[*Speaks loud.*]

Dor. For what, for what—tell me that—I have nothing to do with his desires, nor she neither—he is grown very inquisitive of late about shepherdesses. Fine doings indeed! No such doings when I was young—If he wants to examine any body, why don't he examine me? I'll give him an answer, let him be as inquisitive as he pleases.

Lin. But I am your kinsman, dame, and you dare trust me, sure.

[*Speaks loud.*]

Dor. Thou art the best of them, that I'll say for thee—but the best of you are bad when a young woman is in the case—I have gone through great difficulties myself I can assure you, in better times than these: why must not I go too?

Lin. We shall return to you again, before you can get there.

[*Still speaking loud.*]

Syl. You may trust us, mother---my own innocence, and Linco's goodness, will be guard enough for me.

Dor. Eh! what!

Lin. She says you may trust me with her innocence.

[*Speaking louder.*]

Dor. Well, well, I will then---thou art a sweet creature, and I love thee better than even I did my own child---
[*Kisses Sylvia.*] When thou art fetched away by him that brought thee, 'twill be a woeful day for me.---Well, well, go thy ways with Linco---I dare trust thee any where---I'll prepare thy dinner at thy return; and bring my honest kinsman along with you.

Lin. We will be with you before you can make the pot boil.

Dor. Before what!

Lin. We will be with you before you can make the pot boil.

[*Speaks very loud, and goes off with Sylvia.*]

Dor. Heaven shield thee for the sweetest, best creature that ever blest old age. What a comfort she is to me! All I have to wish for in this world is to know who thou art, who brought thee to me, and then to see thee as happy as thou hast made poor Dorcas. What can the governor want with her? I wish I had gone too---I'd have talk'd to him, and to the purpose---We had no such doings when I was a young woman! they never made such a fuss with me!

AIR.

*When I was young, though now am old,
The men were kind and true;
But now they're grown so false and bold,
What can a woman do?
Now what can a woman do?
For men are truly,
So unruly,
I tremble at seventy-two.*

When I was fair, though now so so

No hearts were given to rove,

Our pulses beat nor fast nor slow,

But all was faith and love;

What can a woman do?

Now what can a woman do?

For men are truly,

So unruly,

I tremble at seventy-two!

[Exit.]

SCENE III.

The Magistrate's House. Enter DORUS and Second Shepherdess.

Dor. This way, this way, damsel—now we are alone, I can hear your grievances, and will redress them, that I will—you have my good liking, damsel, and favour follows of course.

2d. Shep. I want words, your honour and worship, to thank you fitly.

Dor. Smile upon me, damsel—Smile, and command me—your hand is whiter than ever, I protest—you must indulge me with a chaste salute

[*Kisses her hand.*]

2d. Shep. La! your honour.

[*Curtseys.*]

Dor. You have charm'd me, damsel; and I can deny you nothing—another chaste salute—'tis a perfect cordial—[*Kisses her hand.*] Well, what shall I do with this Sylvia, this stranger, this baggage, that has affronted thee? I'll send her where she shall never vex thee again—an impudent, wicked—[*Kisses her hand.*] Smile, damsel, smile—I'll send her packing this very day.

2d. Shep. I vow your worship is too good to me.

[*Leering at him.*]

Dor. Nothing's too good for thee—I'll send her off directly.—Don't fret and teaze thyself about her—go she shall, and speedily too. I have sent my deputy Linco for that Dorcas, who has harbour'd this Sylvia without my knowledge, and the country shall be rid of her to-morrow morning.—Smile upon me, damsel—smile upon me.

2d. Shep. I would I were half as handsome as Sylvia, I might smile to good purpose.

Dor. I'll Sylvia her! an impudent vagrant.—She can neither smile or whine to any purpose, while I am to govern.—She shall go to-morrow, damsel—this hand, this lily hand has sign'd her fate. [Kisses it.]

Enter LINCO.

Lin. No bribery and corruption, I beg of your honour.

Dor. You are too bold, Linco—Where did you learn this impertinence to your superiors?

Lin. From an old song, and please your honour, where I get all my wisdom—Heaven help me.

AIR.

*If she whispers the judge, be he ever so wise,
Though great and important his trust is;
His hand is unsteady, a pair of black eyes
Will kick up the balance of justice.*

*If his passions are strong, his judgment grows weak,
For love through his veins will be creeping;
And his worship, when near to a round dimple cheek,
Though he ought to be blind, will be peeping.*

Dor. Poo, poo, 'tis a very foolish song, and you're a fool for singing it.

2d. Shep. Linco's no friend of mine; Sylvia can sing, and has enchanted him.

Lin. My ears have been feasted, that's most certain—but my heart, damsel, is as uncrack'd as your virtue or his honour's wisdom—There is not too much presumption in that, I hope.

Dor. Linco, do your duty, and know your distance—What is come to the fellow? he is so altered I don't know him again.

Lin. Your honour's eye sight is not so good as it was—I am always the same, and Heaven forbid that mirth should be a sin—I am always laughing and singing—let who will change, I will not. I laugh at the times, but I can't mend 'em—They are woefully altered for the worse—but here's my comfort.

[*Shewing his tabor and pipe.*]

Dor. I'll hear no more of this ribaldry—I hate poetry, and I don't like music—Where is this vagrant—this Sylvia?

Lin. In the justice-chamber, waiting for your honour's commands.

Dor. Why did you not tell me so?

Lin. I thought your honour better engaged, and that it was too much for you to try two female causes at one time.

Dor. You thought! I won't have you think, but obey—Times are changed indeed! Deputies must not think for their superiors.

Lin. Must not they! what will become of our poor country!

[*Going.*]

Dor. No more impertinence, but bring the culprit hither.

Lin. In the twinkling of your honour's eye.

[*Exit.*]

2d. Shep. I leave my griefs in your worship's hands.

Dor. You leave 'em in my heart, damsel, where they soon shall be changed into pleasures—wait for me in the justice chamber—Smile, damsel, smile upon me, and edge the sword of justice.

AIR.

*Smile, damsel, smile,
 I'll frown upon your foe,
 I'll pack her off, the vagrant vile,
 This moment she shall go.
 Smile, damsel, smile,
 Sweet hazle nut,
 The wicked slut,
 Shall trudge for many a mile,
 And all that I shall ask for this,
 Is now and then a harmless kiss,
 Smile, damsel, smile.*

Enter LINCO and SYLVIA.

2d. Shep. Here she comes; see how innocent she looks
 —But I'll be gone—I trust in your worship—I hate
 the sight of her---I could tear her eyes out. *[Exit.*

Dor. *[Gazing at Sylvia.]* Hem, hem!---I am told, young
 woman---hem, hem!---that---she does not look so mischiev-
 ous as I expected. *[Aside, and turning from her.*

Lin. Bear up, sweet shepherdess! your beauty and inno-
 cence will put injustice out of countenance.

Syl. The shame of being suspected confounds me, and I
 can't speak.

Dor. Where is the old woman, Dorcas, they told me of?
 Did not I order you to bring her before me?

Lin. The good old woman is so deaf, and your reverence
 a little thick of hearing, I thought the business would be
 sooner and better done by the young woman.

Dor. What, at your thinking again!---Young shepherdess,
 I hear---I hear---Hem!---Her modesty pleases me. *[Aside.]*
 What is the reason, I say—Hem!—that—that I hear—She
 has very fine features. *[Aside and turning from her.*

Lin. Speak, speak, Sylvia, and the business is done.

Dor. Is not your name Sylvia?

Lin. Yes, your honour, her name is Sylvia.

Dor. I do not ask you. What is your name? look up and tell me, shepherdess.

Syl. Sylvia! [*Sighs and curtsies.*]

Dor. What a sweet look with her eyes she has! [*Aside.*] What can be the reason, Sylvia---that, that---Hem! I protest she disarms my anger. [*Aside, and turns from her.*]

Lin. Now is your time; speak to his reverence.

Dor. Do not whisper the prisoner.

Syl. Prisoner! Am I a prisoner then?

Dor. No, not absolutely a prisoner; but you are charged, damsel---Hem, hem---charged, damsel---I don't know what to say to her. [*Aside, and turns from her.*]

Syl. With what, your honour?

Lin. If he begins to damsel us we have him sure.

Syl. What is my crime?

Lin. A little too handsome, that's all.

Dor. Hold your peace---Why don't you look up in my face if you are innocent? [*Sylvia looks at Dorus with great modesty.*] I can't stand it---she has turn'd my anger, my justice, and my whole scheme, topsy-turvy---Reach me a chair, Linco.

Lin. One sweet song, Sylvia, before his reverence gives sentence. [*Reaches a chair for Dorus.*]

Dor. No singing, her looks have done too much already.

Lin. Only to soften your rigour.

AIR.—SYLVIA.

*From duty if the shepherd stray,
And leave his flocks to feed,
The wolf will seize the harmless prey,
And innocence will bleed.*

*In me a harmless lamb behold,
Opprest with every fear ;
O, guard, good shepherd, guard the fold,
For wicked wolves are near.*

[Kneels.

Dor. I'll guard thee and fold thee too, my lambkin—
and they shan't hurt thee—This is a melting ditty, indeed !
Rise, rise, my Sylvia. [Embraces her.

Enter Second Shepherdess.

[Dorus and she start at seeing each other.

2d. Shep. Is your reverence taking leave of her before you
drive her out of the country ?

Dor. How now ! What presumption is this to break in
upon us so, and interrupt the course of justice ?

2d. Shep. May I be permitted to speak three words with
your worship ?—

Dor. Well, well, I will speak to you—I'll come to you
in the justice-chamber presently.

2d. Shep. I knew the wheedling slut would spoil all—but
I'll be up with her yet. [Aside and exit.

Dor. I'm glad she's gone—Linco, you must send her
away—I won't see her now.

Lin. And shall I take Sylvia to prison ?

Dor. No, no, no ; to prison ! mercy forbid !—What a
sin should I have committed to please that envious, jealous-
pated shepherdess ?—Linco, comfort the damsel—Dry
your tears, Sylvia—I will call upon you myself—and
examine Dorcas myself—and protect you myself—and
do every thing myself—I profess she has bewitched me !
I am all agitation—I'll call upon you to-morrow---perhaps
to-night---perhaps in half an hour—Take care of her,
Linco---she has bewitched me, and I shall lose my wits if I
look on her any longer—Oh ! the sweet, lovely, pretty
creature !

Lin. Don't whimper now, my sweet Sylvia—justice has taken up the sword and scales again, and your rivals shall cry their eyes out—The day's our own.

AIR.

*Sing high derry derry,
The day is our own.
Be wise and be merry,
Let sorrow alone;
Alter your tone,
To high derry derry,
Be wise and be merry,
The day is our own.*

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

An Old Castle. Enter URGANDA, greatly agitated.

RECITATIVE accompanied.

Urganda.

Lost, lost Urganda!—Nothing can controul
The beating tempest of my restless soul!
While I prepare, in this dark 'witching hour,
My potent spells, and call forth all my power—
Arise, ye demons of revenge, arise!
Begin your rites—unseen by mortal eyes;
Hurl plagues and mischiefs through the poison'd air,
And give me vengeance to appease despair!

Chorus---[Under ground] We come, we come, we come.

[She waves her wand and the Castle vanishes.]

The first demon of revenge arises, with his followers.

AIR.

*While mortals charm their cares by sleep,
 And demons howl below,
 Urganda calls us from the deep ;
 Arise, ye sons of woe !
 Ever busy, ever willing,
 All these horrid tasks fulfilling,
 Which draw from mortal breasts the groan,
 And make their torments like our own.*

Chorus of Demons under ground.

We come, we come, we come !

*[Other Demons arise and perform their rites, then exeunt
 with Urganda at their head.]*

SCENE II.

*The Country. Enter LINCO, drawing in DAMON and
 DORILAS.*

Lin. Nay, nay, but let me talk to you a little—by the lark you are early stirrers—has not that gad-fly jealousy stung you to this same mischief you are upon ?

Dam. We are commanded by our governor, who has orders from Urganda to bring Cymon and Sylvia before her.

Lin. And you are fond of this employment, are you ? fye for shame—I know more than you think I know.—You were each of you (good souls !) betroth'd to two shepherdesses—but Sylvia comes in the nick, and away go vows, promises, and protestations—she loving Cymon, and despising you—and you. You, hating one another, join cordially to distress them for loving one another—fye, for shame, shepherds !

Dam. What will the governor say to this? This is fine treatment of your betters.

Lin. If my betters are no better than they should be, 'tis their fault, and not mine—Urganda, Dorus, and you, not being able to reach the grapes, won't let any body else taste them—Oh fye, for shame, shepherds!

Dam. We have no time to lose—we must raise the shepherds, and hunt after these young sinners; and you, Mr. Deputy, for all your airs, must make one in the chase.

Lin. Before I would follow unlawful game to please a hot-liver'd enchantress, an old itching governor, and two such jealous-pated noodles as yourselves, I would thrust my pipe through my tabor, chuck it into the river, and myself after it.

Dam. Here comes the governor; now we shall hear what you will say to him.

Lin. Just what I have said to you; an honest laughing fellow, like myself, don't mind a governor, though I should raise his spleen, and lose my place into the bargain—there are not many deputies in Arcadia of the same mind.

Dori. Come, come, let us mind our business, and not his impertinence.

Dam. If the governor would do as I wish him, you would have your deserts, Mr. Deputy Linco.

Lin. And if Cymon would do as I wish him, you would have your deserts, my gentle shepherds.

Enter DORUS and Arcadians.

Dor. Where have you been, Linco? I sent for you an hour ago.

Lin. I was in bed, your honour; and, as I don't walk in my sleep, I could not be well with you before I was dressed.

Dor. No joking—no joking—we are ordered by the enchantress to search for Cymon and Sylvia, and bring them before her.

Lin. I hate to spoil sport—so I'll go home again.

[*Going.*]

Dor. Stay, *Linco.* [*He returns.*] I command you to do your duty, and go with me in pursuit of these young criminals.

Lin. Criminals! Heaven bless them, I say!—I'll go home again.

[*Going.*]

Dor. Was there ever such insolence!—Come back, *Linco.* How dare you disobey what I order, and Urganda commands? Give me an answer.

Lin. Conscience! conscience! governor—an old fashion'd excuse, but a true one—I cannot find in my heart to disturb two sweet young creatures—whom, as Heaven has put together, I will not attempt to divide:—'t would be a crying sin!—I'll go home again.

[*Going.*]

Dor. You are a scandal to your place, and you shall hold it no longer; I'll take it from you instantly.

Lin. You cannot take from me a quiet conscience and a merry heart; you are heartily welcome to all the rest, governor.

Dor. I dismiss you from this moment; you shall be no deputy of mine; you shall suffer for your arrogance; I shall tell the enchantress that you are leagu'd with this *Sylvia*, and will not do your duty.

Lin. A word with your honour.—Could you have been leagu'd with this *Sylvia* too, you would not have done your duty, Mr. Governor.

Dor. Hem!—Come along, shepherds, and don't mind his impudence.

[*Exeunt Dorus and Shepherds.*]

Lin. I wish your reverence a good morning, and thank you for all favours. Any fool, now, that was less merry than myself, would be out of spirits for being out of place; but as matters are now turned topsy-turvy, I won't walk

upon my head for the best office in Arcadia.—And so, my virtuous old governor, get what deputy you please; I shall stick to my tabor and pipe, and sing away the loss of one place till I can whistle myself into a another.

AIR.

*When peace here was reigning,
And love without waining,
Or care or complaining,
Base passions disdaining;
This, this was my way;
With my pipe and my tabor,
I laugh down the day,
Nor envy'd the joys of my neighbour.*

*Now sad transformation,
Runs through the whole nation;
Peace, love, recreation,
All chang'd to vexation;
This, this is my way;
With my pipe and my tabor,
I laugh down the day,
And pity the cares of my neighbour.*

*" While all are designing,
" Their friends undermining,
" Reviling, repining,
" To mischief inclining;
" This, this is my way;
" With my pipe and my tabor,
" I laugh down the day,
" And pity the cares of my neighbour."* [Exit.

SCENE III.

Another part of the Country. Enter FATIMA.

Fati. Truly a very pretty mischievous errand I am sent upon—I am to follow this foolish young fellow all about to find out his haunts—not so foolish neither, for he is so much improved of late, we shrewdly suspect that he must have some female to sharpen his intellects—for love, among many other strange things, can make fools of wits, and wits of fools. I saw our young partridge run before me, and take cover hereabouts; I must make no noise, for fear of alarming him; besides, I hate to disturb the poor things in pairing time.
[*Looks through the bushes.*]

Enter MERLIN, behind her.

Mer. I shall spoil your peeping, thou evil counsellor of a faithless mistress—I must torment her a little for her good—Such females must feel much, to be made just and reasonable creatures.
[*Fatima peeping through the bushes.*]

Fati. There they are—our fool has made no bad choice: upon my word, a very pretty couple! and will make my poor lady's heart ach.

Mer. I shall twinge yours a little before we part.

Fati. Well said, Cymon! upon your knees to her. Now for my pocket book, that I may exactly describe this rival of ours; she is much too handsome to live long; she will be either burnt alive, thrown to wild beasts, or shut up in the Black Tower—the greatest mercy she can have will be to let her take her choice.
[*Takes out a pocket book.*]

Mer. May be so—but we will prevent the prophecy if we can.

Fati. [*Writing in her book.*] She is of a good height, about my size—a fine shape—delicate features—charming hair—heavenly eyes, not unlike my own—with such a sweet smile!—She must be burnt alive! yes, yes, she must be burnt alive! [*Merlin taps her upon the shoulder with his wand.* Who's there?—bless me! nobody—I protest it startled me. I must finish my picture. [*Writes on—Merlin waves his wand over her head.*]—Now let me see what I have written.—Bless me, what's here! all the letters are as red as blood—My eyes fail me! Sure I am bewitched. [*Reads and trembles.*] 'Urganda has a shameful passion for Cymon, 'Cymon a most virtuous one for Sylvia; as for Fatima, 'wild beasts, the Black Tower, and burning alive are too 'good for her.' [*Drops the book.*] O! O!—I have not power to stir a step—I knew what would come of affronting that devil, Merlin. [*Merlin is visible.*

Mer. True, Fatima, and I am here at your service.

Fati. O, most magnanimous Merlin! don't set your wit to a poor foolish weak woman.

Mer. Why, then, will a foolish weak woman set her wit to me? But we will be better friends for the future—Mark me, Fatima. [*Holds up his wand.*

Fati. No conjuration, I beseech your worship, and you shall do any thing with me.

Mer. I want nothing of you but to hold your tongue.

Fati. Will nothing else content your fury?

Mer. Silence, babblers.

Fati. I am your own for ever, most merciful Merlin! I am your own for ever.—O, my poor tongue! I thought I never should have wagg'd thee again—What a dreadful thing it would be to be dumb?

Mer. You see it is not in the power of Urganda to protect you, or to injure Cymon and Sylvia. I will be their

protector against all her arts, though she has leagu'd herself with the demons of revenge. We have no power but what results from our virtue.

Fati. I had rather lose any thing than my speech.

Mer. As you profess yourself my friend (for, with all my art, I cannot see into a woman's mind) I will show my gratitude, and my power, by giving your tongue an additional accomplishment.

Fati. What, shall I talk more than ever?

Mer. [*Smiling.*] That would be no accomplishment, *Fatima*. No, I mean that you shall talk less. When you return to *Urganda*, she will be very inquisitive, and you very ready to tell her all you know.

Fati. And may I without offence to your worship?

Mer. Silence, and mark me well; observe me truly and punctually. Every answer you give to *Urganda's* questions must be confined to two words, *yes* and *no*. I have done you a great favour, and you don't perceive it.

Fati. Not very clearly, indeed. [*Aside.*]

Mer. Beware of encroaching a single monosyllable upon my injunction; the moment another word escapes you you are dumb.

Fati. Heaven preserve me! what will become of me?

Mer. Remember what I say-- as you obey or neglect me, you will be punished or rewarded.

AIR.---MERLIN.

*Be sure you regard what I say,
My commands to a tittle obey,
Beware, beware,
I ride in the air,
And will watch you by night and by day;*

*Though I raise both the sea and the wind,
The tempest in fetters can bind,
Yet my magic, more powerful and strong,
Can stop the full tide of a woman's tongue.*

*Merlin strikes the Scene, which opens and discovers his Dragons
and Chariot, which carry him away.*

Farewell. [*Bowing to her.*] Remember me, Fatima.

Fati. I shall never forget you, I am sure. What a polite devil it is! and what a woeful plight am I in!—This confining my tongue to two words is much worse than being quite dumb. I had rather be stinted in any thing than my speech—Heigho!—there never sure was a tax upon the tongue before.

AIR.

*Tax my tongue, it is a shame :
Merlin, sure, is much to blame,
Not to let it sweetly flow.
Yet the favours of the great,
And the silly maiden's fate,
Oft depend on Yes or No.
Lack-a-day !
Poor Fatima !
Stinted so,
To Yes or No.*

*Should I want to talk and chat,
Tell Urganda this or that,
How shall I about it go ?
Let her ask me what she will,
I must keep my clapper still,
Striking only Yes or No.*

Lack-a-day!
Poor Fatima!
Stinted so,
To Yes or No!

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Enter CYMON and SYLVIA, arm in arm.

Cym. You must not sigh, my Sylvia—love like ours can have no bitter mingled with his sweets. It has given me eyes, ears, and understanding; and, till they forsake me, I must be Sylvia's.

Syl. And while I retain mine I know no happiness but with Cymon; and yet, Urganda——

Cym. Why will you sully again the purity of our joys, with the thoughts of that unhappy, because guilty woman. Has not Merlin discover'd all that was unknown to us? Has he not promised us his protection, and told us, that we are the care of superior beings, and that more blessings, if possible, are in store for us?—What can Sylvia want, when Cymon is completely blest?

Syl. Nothing but my Cymon; when that is secure to me I have not a wish for more.

Cym. Thy wishes are fulfilled then, and mine in thee!

Syl. Take my hand, and with it a heart, which, till you had touch'd, never knew, nor could even imagine, what was love; but my passion now is as sincere as it is tender, and it would be ungrateful to disguise my affections, as they are my greatest pride and happiness.

Cym. Transporting maid!

[*Kisses her hand.*

AIR.—SYLVIA.

*This cold flinty heart it is you who have warm'd,
You waken'd my passions, my senses have charm'd;
In vain against merit and Cymon I strove;
What's life without passion—sweet passion of love?*

*The frost nips the bud, and the rose cannot blow,
From youth that is frost-nipt no raptures can flow,
Elysium to him but a desert will prove;
What's life without passion—sweet passion of love?*

*The spring should be warm, the young season be gay,
Her birds and her flowrets make blithsome sweet May,
Love blesses the cottage, and sings through the grove;
What's life without passion—sweet passion of love?*

Cym. Thus then I seize my treasure, will protect it with
my life, and will never resign it but to Heaven who gave it
me. [Embraces her.

Enter DAMON and DORILAS on one side, and DORUS and his
followers on the other, who start at seeing Cymon and Sylvia.

Dam. Here they are!

Syl. Ha! bless me!

[Starting.

Dor. Fine doings indeed!

[Cymon and Sylvia stand amaz'd and asham'd.

Dori. Your humble servant, modest madam Sylvia!

Dam. You are much improv'd by your new tutor.

Dor. But I'll send her and her tutor where they shall
learn better. I am confounded at their assurance!—Why
do n't you speak, culprits?

Cym. We may be ashamed without guilt, to be watch'd

and surpriz'd by those who ought to be more asham'd at what they have done.

Syl. Be calm, my Cymon, they mean us mischief.

Cym. But they can do us none—fear them not, my shepherdess.

Dor. Did you ever hear or see such an impudent couple? but I'll secure you from such intemperate doings.

Dam. Shall we seize them, your worship, and drag them to Urganda?

Dor. Let me speak first with that shepherdess.

[As he approaches, Cymon puts her behind him.]

Cym. That shepherdess is not to be spoken with.

Dor. Here's impudence in perfection! Do you know who I am, stripling?

Cym. I know you to be one who ought to observe the laws, and protect innocence; but having passions that disgrace both your age and place, you neither do one or the other.

Dor. I am astonish'd!—What, are you the foolish young fellow I have heard so much of?

Cym. As sure as you are the wicked old fellow I have heard so much of.

Dor. Seize them both this instant.

Cym. That is sooner said than done, governor.

[As they approach on both sides to seize them, he snatches a staff from one of the shepherds, and beats them back.]

Dor. Fall on him, but don't kill him, for I must make an example of him.

Cym. In this cause I am myself an army; see how the wretches stare, and cannot stir.

AIR.—CYMON.

Come on, come on,

A thousand to one,

I dare you to come on.

*Though unpractis'd and young,
Love has made me stout and strong;
Has given me a charm,
Will not suffer me to fall:
Has steel'd my heart, and nerv'd my arm,
To guard my precious all. [Looking at Sylvia.
Come on, come on, &c. [Exit.*

AIR.—SYLVIA.

*O, Merlin, now befriend him!
From their rage defend him.*

*While Cymon drives off the party of Shepherds on one side, enter
DORUS and his party, who surround Sylvia.*

Dor. Away with her, away with her——

*Syl. Protect me, Merlin!——Cymon! Cymon! where
art thou, Cymon?*

*Dor. Your fool Cymon is too fond of fighting to mind his
mistress: away with her to Urganda, away with her.*

[They hurry her off.

Enter Shepherds, running across disordered and beaten by Cymon.

*Dam. [Looking back.] 'Tis the devil of a fellow! how he
has laid about him. [Exit.*

Dori. There is no way but this to avoid him. [Exit.

Enter CYMON in confusion, and out of breath.

*Cym. I have conquered, my Sylvia!——Where art thou?
—my life, my love, my valour, my all!——What, gone!—
torn from me! then I am conquer'd indeed!*

*[He runs off, and returns several times during the symphony
of the following song.]*

AIR.

*Torn from me, torn from me, which way did they take her?
 To death they shall bear me,
 To pieces shall tear me,
 Before I'll forsake her!
 Though fast bound in a spell,
 By Urganda and hell,
 I'll burst through their charms,
 Seize my fair in my arms,
 Then my valour shall prove,
 No magic like virtue---like Virtue and Love.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Grotto. Enter URGANDA and FATIMA.

Urganda, angry.

YES!---No!---forbear this mockery. What can it mean?
 I will not bear this trifling with my passion---Fatima, my
 heart's upon the rack, and must not be sported with; let
 me know the worst, and quickly---to conceal it from me
 is not kindness, but the height of cruelty.---Why don't
 you speak? [*Fatima shakes her head.*] Won't you speak?

Fati. Yes.

Urg. Go on then.

Fati. No.

Urg. Will you say nothing but no?

Fati. Yes.

Urg. Distracting, treacherous Fatima!---Have you seen
 my rival?

Fati. Yes.

Urg. Thanks, dear Fatima!—well, now go on.

Fati. No.

Urg. This is not to be borne—Was Cymon with her?

Fati. Yes.

Urg. Are they in love with each other?

Fati. Yes.

[*Sighing.*]

Urg. Where did you see my rival? [*Fatima shakes her head.*] False, unkind, obstinate Fatima!—Won't you tell me?

Fati. No.

Urg. You are brib'd to betray me?

Fati. No.

Urg. What, still yes and no?

Fati. Yes.

Urg. And not a single word more?

Fati. No.

Urg. Are you afraid of any body?

Fati. Yes.

Urg. Are you not afraid of me too?

Fati. No.

Urg. Insolence! Is my rival handsome? tell me that?

Fati. Yes.

Urg. Very handsome?

Fati. Yes, yes.

Urg. How handsome? handsomer than I, or you?

Fati. Yes---No—

[*Hesitating.*]

Urg. How can you see me thus miserable and not relieve me? have you no pity for me?

Fati. Yes!

[*Sighing.*]

Urg. Convince me of it, and tell me all.

Fati. No!

[*Sighing.*]

Urg. I shall go distracted!—Leave me.

Fati. Yes.

Urg. And dare not come into my presence.

Fati. No.

[*Curtseys and exit.*]

Urg. [*Alone.*] She has a spell upon her, or she could not do thus---Merlin's power has prevailed---he has enchanted her, and my love and my revenge are equally disappointed. ---This is the completion of my misery!

Enter DORUS.

Dor. May I presume to intrude upon my sovereign's contemplations?

Urg. Dare not to approach my misery, or thou shalt partake of it.

Dor. I am gone---and Sylvia shall go too. [*Going.*]

Urg. Sylvia, said you? where is she? where is she? speak, speak---and give me life or death.

Dor. She is without, and attends your mighty will.

Urg. Then I am queen again!---Forgive me, Dorus---I was lost in thought, sunk in despair; I knew not what I said---but now I am rais'd again!---Sylvia is safe!

Dor. Yes; and I am safe too, which is no small comfort to me, considering where I have been.

Urg. And Cymon---has he escap'd?

Dor. Yes, he has escap'd from us; and, what is better, we have escap'd from him.

Urg. Where is he?

Dor. Breaking the bones of every shepherd he meets.

Urg. Well, no matter---I am in possession of the present object of my passion, and I will indulge it to the height of luxury! Let 'em prepare my victim instantly for death.

Dor. For death! Is not that going too far?

Urg. Nothing is too far---she makes me suffer ten thousand deaths, and nothing but her's can appease me. [*Dorus going.*] Stay, Dorus---I have a richer revenge;

she shall be shut up in the Black Tower till her beauties are destroy'd, and then I will present her to this ungrateful Cymon—Let her be brought before me, and I will feast my eyes, and ease my heart, with this devoted Sylvia---No reply, but obey.

Dor. It is done---This is going too far.

[*Aside.*

[*Exit shrugging up his shoulders.*

AIR.---URGANDA.

*Though still of raging winds the sport,
My shipwreck'd heart shall gain the port;
Revenge, the pilot steers the way;
No more of tenderness and love,
The eagle in her gripe has seiz'd the dove,
And thinks of nothing but her prey.*

Enter SYLVIA, DORUS, and Guards.

Urg. Are you the wretch, the unhappy maid, who has dar'd to be the rival of Urganda?

Syl. I am no wretch, but the happy maid who am possess'd of the affections of Cymon, and with them have nothing to hope or fear.

Urg. Thou vain rash creature!--I will make thee fear my power, and hope for my mercy.

[*Waves her wand, and the scene changes to the Black Rocks.*

Syl. I am still unmov'd.

[*Smiling.*

Urg. Thou art on the very brink of perdition, and in a moment wilt be clos'd in a tower, where thou shalt never see Cymon, or any human being more.

Syl. While I have Cymon in my heart I bear a charm about me, to scorn your power, or, what is more, your cruelty.

[*Urganda waves her wand, and the Black Tower appears.*

Urg. Open the gates, and enclose her insolence for ever.

Syl. I am ready.

[Smiling at Urganda.

AIR.

*Though various deaths surround me,
No terrors can confound me ;
Protected from above,
I glory in my love !
Against thy cruel might,
And in this dreadful hour,
I have a sure defence,
'Tis innocence !
That heavenly right,
To smile on guilty power !*

Urg. Let me no more be tormented with her ; I cannot bear to hear or see her.—Close her in the tower for ever !

[They put Sylvia in the tower.] Now let Merlin release you if he can.

[Exultingly.

[It thunders—the Tower and Rocks give way to a magnificent Amphitheatre, and Merlin appears in the place where the Tower sunk : All shriek, and run off, except Urganda, who is struck with terror.]

Mer. ' Still shall my power your arts confound ;
' And Cymon's cure shall be Urganda's wound.'

[Urganda waves her wand.

Mer. Ha, ha, ha!—your power is gone—

Urg. I am all terror and shame—in vain I wave this wand—I feel my power is gone, yet I still retain my passions—My misery is complete !

Mer. It is indeed ! No power, no happiness were superior to thine till you sunk them by your falsehood—you now find, but too late, that there is no magic like virtue.

[Sound of warlike instruments.

Urg. What means those sounds of joy?—my heart forebodes that they proclaim my fall and dishonour.

Mer. The knights of the different orders of chivalry, who were sent by Cymon's father in quest of his son, were drawn hither, by my power, from their several stations to one spot, and at the same instant: the general astonishment at their meeting was soon changed into general joy, when they were told by what means, and upon what occasion they were so unexpectedly assembled; and they are now preparing to celebrate, and protect the marriage of Cymon with Sylvia.

Urg. Death to my hopes!—then I am lost indeed!

Mer. From the moment you wrong'd me, and yourself, I became their protector—I counteracted all your schemes, I continued Cymon in his state of ignorance till he was cured by Sylvia, whom I conveyed here for that purpose; that shepherdess is a princess equal to Cymon—They have obtained by their virtues the throne of Arcadia, which you have lost by—But I have done, I see your repentance, and my anger melts into pity.

Urg. Pity me not—I am undeserving of it—I have been cruel and faithless, and ought to be wretched—Thus I destroy the small remains of my sovereignty. [*Breaks her wand.*] May power, basely exerted, be ever thus broken and dispersed!

[*She throws it from her.*]

Forgive my errors and forget my name,
O, drive me hence with penitence and shame;
From Merlin, Cymon, Sylvia, let me fly,
Beholding them, my shame can never die.

[*Exit Urganda.*]

Mer. Falsehood is punished, virtue rewarded, and Arcadia made happy.

A warlike March. Enter the procession of Knights of the different Orders of Chivalry, with Enchanters, &c. who range themselves round the Amphitheatre, followed by CYMON, SYLVIA, and MERLIN, who are brought in triumph, drawn by Loves, preceded by Cupid and Hymen, walking arm in arm. Then enter the Arcadian Shepherds, with DORUS and LINCO at their head; DAMON and DORILAS, with their Shepherdesses, &c. MERLIN, CYMON, and SYLVIA descend from the Car. MERLIN joins their hands, and then speaks the following lines.

Mer. Now join your hands, whose hearts were join'd before,
This union shall Arcadia's peace restore :
When virtues such as these adorn a throne,
The people make their sovereign's bliss their own :
Their joys, their virtues, shall each subject share,
And all the land reflect the royal pair !

CHORUS.

*Each heart and each voice
In Arcadia rejoice ;
Let gratitude raise
To Merlin our praise :
Long, long may we share
The joys of this pair !
Long, long may they live,
To share the bliss they give !*

*[Cymon, Sylvia, and Merlin retire to the Knights,
while Linco calls the Shepherds about him.]*

Lin. My good neighbours and friends (for now I am not
asham'd to call you so) your deputy Linco has but a short
charge to give you. As we have turn'd over a new fair leaf,
let us never look back to our past blots and errors.

Dor. No more we will, Linco. No retrospection.

Lin. I meant to oblige your worship in the proposition; I shall ever be a good subject, [*Bowing to Cymon and Sylvia*] and your friend and obedient deputy. Let us have a hundred marriages directly, and no more inconstancy, jealousy, or coquetry from this day. The best purifier of the blood is mirth, with a few grains of wisdom—We will take it every day, neighbours, as the best preservative against bad humours. *Be merry and wise*, according to the old proverb, and I defy the devil ever to get among you again; and that we may be sure to get rid of him, let us drive him quite away with a little more singing and dancing, for he hates mortally mirth and good fellowship.

[*A dance of Arcadian Shepherds and Shepherdesses.*]

AIR.—DAMON.

*Each shepherd again shall be constant and kind,
And ev'ry stray'd heart shall each shepherdess find.*

DELIA.

*If faithful our shepherds, we always are true,
Our faith and our falsehood we borrow from you.*

CHORUS.

*While we're virtuous, while we're free,
Ever happy shall we be.*

FATIMA.

*Let those, who the sword and the balance must hold,
To interest be blind, and to beauty be cold:
When justice has eyes, her integrity fails,
Her sword becomes blunted, and down drop her scales.*

CHORUS.

While we're virtuous, &c.

LINCO.

*The bliss of your heart no rude care shall molest,
While innocent mirth is your bosom's sweet guest;
Of that happy pair let us worthy be seen,
Love, honour, and copy your king and your queen.*

CHORUS.

While we're virtuous, &c.

SYLVIA.

*Let love, peace, and joy, still be seen hand in hand,
To dance on this turf, and again bless the land.*

CYMON.

*Love and Hymen of blessings have open'd their store,
For Cymon with Sylvia can wish nothing more.*

BOTH.

Love and Hymen of blessings have open'd their store,

CYMON.

For Cymon with Sylvia can wish nothing more.

SYLVIA.

For Sylvia with Cymon can wish nothing more.

CHORUS.

*While we're virtuous, while we're free,
Ever happy shall we be!*

EPILOGUE.

Written by GEORGE KEATE, Esq.---Spoken by Mrs. ABINGTON.

Enter, peeping in at the Stage Door.

*Is the Stage clear?---bless me!---I've such a dread!
It seems enchanted ground where'er I tread!*

[Coming forward.

What noise was that!---hush!---'t was a false alarm---

I'm sure there's no one here will do me harm:

Amongst you can't be found a single knight,

Who would not do an injur'd damsel right.

Well---Heaven be prais'd! I'm out of magic reach,

And have once more regain'd the power of speech:

Aye, and I'll use it---for it must appear,

That my poor tongue is greatly in arrear---

There's not a female here but shar'd my woe,

Ty'd down to YES, or still more hateful NO.

No is expressive---but I must confess,

If rightly question'd, I'd use only YES.

In MERLIN's walk this broken wand I found,

[Shewing a broken wand.

Which to two words my speaking organs bound.

Suppose upon the town I try his spell---

Ladies, don't stir!---You use your tongues too well!

How tranquil ev'ry place, when, by my skill,

Folly is mute, and even Slander still!

Old Gossips speechless---Bloods would breed no riot,

And all the tongues at Jonathan's lie quiet!

Each grave Profession must new bush the wig;

Nothing to say, 't were needless they look big!

*The reverend Doctor might the change endure,
 He would sit still, and have his Sine Cure!
 Nor could Great Folks much hardship undergo;
 They do their business with an AYE or NO!—
 But come---I only jok'd---dismiss your fear;
 Though I've the power, I will not use it here.
 I'll only keep my magic as a guard
 To awe each critic who attacks our bard.
 I see some malcontents their fingers biting,
 Snarling, 'the ancients never knew such writing—
 'The drama's lost!--the managers exhaust us,
 'With Op'ras, Monkies, Mab, and Dr. Faustus.'
 Dread Sirs, a word!--the public taste is fickle;
 All palates in their turn we strive to tickle;
 Our caterers vary, and you'll own, at least,
 It is Variety that makes the feast.
 If this fair circle smile---and the Gods thunder,
 I wish this wand will keep the critics under.*

1

THE
PLAIN DEALER.

A
COMEDY.

ALTERED FROM
WILLIAM WYCHERLEY,
AND ADAPTED TO THE STAGE
BY ISAAC BICKERSTAFF.

AS PERFORMED AT
THE THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,
By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by Inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON:

Printed for, and under the Direction of,
GEORGE CAWTHORN, *British Library, STRAND.*

M DCC XCVI.

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COMEDY.

ACTED AT

WILLIAM WYCHERLEY,

AND ADAPTED TO THE STAGE

BY JAMES PICKER.

AS PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.



REGULATED BY THE ACT OF PARLIAMENT.

Printed by J. JOHNSON, Strand.

THE ACT OF PARLIAMENT, IN RELATION TO THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN, AND THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE, IS HEREBY REPRODUCED.

LONDON:

Printed for, and under the Direction of,
GEORGE CANTON, British Library, Strand.

1850.

TO
DAVID GARRICK, ESQ.
THE GREATEST ORNAMENT
THE THEATRE EVER HAD TO BOAST;
IN GRATITUDE
FOR HIS JUDICIOUS CORRECTION OF
THESE ALTERATIONS;
AND HIS JUST AND LIVELY INSTRUCTIONS,
WHICH HAVE SO GREATLY ASSISTED THEM IN
REPRESENTATION;
AND AS
A TRIBUTE OF AFFECTION AND ESTEEM,
FOR HIS MANY SHINING AND
AMIALE QUALITIES;
THIS ATTEMPT TO RESTORE TO THE STAGE
ONE OF THE FATHERS OF OUR
ENGLISH COMEDY,
IS INSCRIBED,
BY HIS MOST OBLIGED
AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

August, 1766.

ISAAC BICKERSTAFF.

Dramatis Personae.

DRURY-LANE.

Men.

MANLY,	-	-	Mr. Bensley.
FREEMAN,	-	-	Mr. Farren.
LORD PLAUSIBLE,	-	-	Mr. Suett.
NOVEL,	-	-	Mr. Palmer.
VARNISH,	-	-	Mr. Packer.
MAJOR OLDFOX,	-	-	Mr. Moody.
JERRY BLACKACRE,	-	-	Mr. Dodd.
Counsellor QUILLIT,	-	-	Mr. Wrighten.
OAKUM,	-	-	Mr. Wright.
A Boy,			
Counsellor PLODDEN.			
Bookseller.			

Women.

OLIVIA,	-	-	Miss Pope.
FIDELIA,	-	-	Mrs. Wilson.
Mrs. BLACKACRE,	-	-	Mrs. Hopkins.
ELIZA,	-	-	Miss Wheeler.
LETTICE,	-	-	Miss Tidswell.

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Written by GEORGE KEATE, Esq.---Spoken by Mrs. ABINGTON.

Enter, peeping in at the Stage Door.

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[Coming forward.]

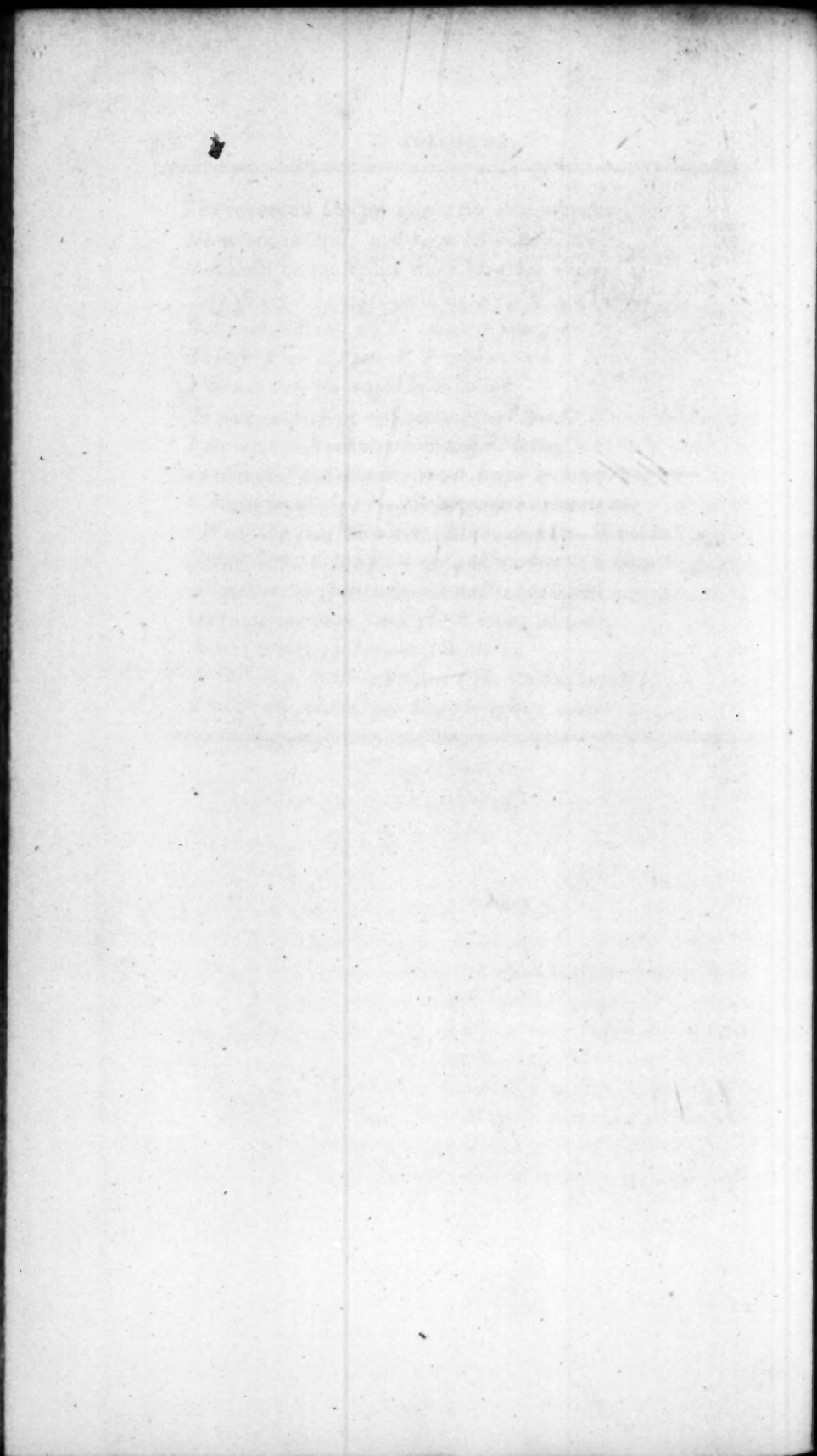
*What noise was that!---hush!---'t was a false alarm---
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Amongst you can't be found a single knight,
Who would not do an injur'd damsel right.
Well---Heaven be prais'd! I'm out of magic reach,
And have once more regain'd the power of speech:
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Our caterers vary, and you'll own, at least,
It is Variety that makes the feast.
If this fair circle smile---and the Gods thunder,
I wish this wand will keep the critics under.*





THE PLAIN DEALER.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*Manly's Lodgings. MANLY enters in a Morning Gown,
followed by Lord PLAUSIBLE,*

Manly.

PRAY, my lord, pray, my Lord Plausible, give me leave ;
I have more of the mastiff than the spaniel in my nature, I
own it ; besides, I am too old now to learn to play tricks ;
I cannot fawn, and fetch and carry ; neither will I ever
practise that servile complaisance, which some people pique
themselves on being masters of.

L. Plau. Well, but seriously, my dear friend, this is
being singular—Will you declare war against general
custom ; refuse to subscribe to the common forms of good
breeding ?

Man. Forms, indeed, my lord ; they are mere forms, and
therefore shall not sway me. In short, I will not, as your
subscribers to forms do, whisper my contempt or hatred ;
call a man fool, or knave, by signs, or mouths over his
shoulder, while I have him in my arms.—I will not do as
you do.

L. Plau. As I do !—Heaven defend me ! upon my honour
I never attempted to abuse, or lessen any one in my life.

Man. What! you were afraid?

L. Plau. No; but seriously I hate to do a rude thing.—
No, faith, I speak well of all mankind.

Man. I thought so; but know that is the worst sort of detraction, for it takes away the reputation of the few good men in the world, by making all alike. Now I speak ill of most men because they deserve it.

L. Plau. Well, tell not me, my dear friend, what people deserve; I, like an author in a dedication, never speak well of a man for his sake, but my own: I will not disparage any one to disparage myself: to speak ill of people behind their backs is not pretty, and to speak ill of them to their faces would be the most monstrous thing in nature.

Man. So that if you was to say an unhandsome thing of any of your friends, I suppose you would choose to do it behind their backs.

L. Plau. Oh, certainly, certainly: I would do it behind their backs out of pure good manners.

Man. Very well, my lord: I have not leisure at present to examine into the propriety of your decorums; I confess, I am but an unpolished sea-fellow. But there is a favour, which if your lordship would grant me——

L. Plau. A favour, dear sir! you make me the happiest man in the world; pray let me know how I have it in my power to serve you?

Man. No otherwise, my lord, than by leaving me a little to myself; at present I am really quite unfit for company.

L. Plau. Perhaps you have business.

Man. If you have any, I would not detain your lordship.

L. Plau. Detain me!—Dear sir, I came on purpose to pay my respects to you: I heard of your arrival in town last night, and could not be easy. But be free with me: if my company is in the least disagreeable or inconvenient——

Man. I have told your lordship, already, I had rather be alone.

L. Plau. I will lay hold, then, of some other opportunity of paying my most humble respects to you—and in the mean time——

OAKUM enters.

Man. Oakum! wait on his lordship down.

L. Plau. Sir, I am your most obedient.

Man. Good bye to your lordship.

L. Plau. Your most faithful.

Man. Your servant, your servant.

L. Plau. And eternally——

Man. And eternal ceremony!——

L. Plau. You shall use no ceremony, by my life!

Man. I do not intend it.

L. Plau. Where are you going, then?

Man. Zounds! to see you out of doors, that I may shut them against more welcomes. [*Exeunt Man. and L. Plau.*]

Oak. Well said, bully-tar! He came alongside of his match when he grappled with you, I can tell him that.—Zounds, he makes no more of one of these fresh-water sparks, than a three-decker would of a bomb-boat! But he's as brave a heart as ever stepp'd between stem and stern; and so's a sign, by his sinking our fine vessel the other day, rather than let her fall into the hands of the rascally French, when he found three or four of their picca-rooms at once were too many for us. Let me see—'T is just six weeks since we sailed out of Portsmouth harbour, and we had scarce been a month on our cruize before we fell in with the enemy's squadron—Ah! we have made a base, broken, short voyage of it—Howsomever, he soon expects to be put into commission again, and I would go with him

about the round world, if so be it was his destination; for thof he's as crusty as any one sometimes, and will be obeyed, there's never a captain in the navy that's a truer friend to a seaman.—Avast, though! He steers this way, in company of our merry lieutenant: 't is foul weather, I doubt: I'll loof up, and get to windward of him. [*Retires.*]

MANLY and FREEMAN *enter.*

Fre. But how the devil could you turn a man of his quality down stairs? You use a lord with very little ceremony, it seems.

Man. A lord! What, you are one of those who esteem men only by the value and marks which fortune has set upon them, and never consider intrinsic worth! but counterfeit honours will not be current with me; I weigh the man, not his title: it is not the king's inscription can make the metal better or heavier. Your lord is a leaden shilling, which you bend every way, and debases the stamp he bears, instead of being raised by it.—And you, rascal, blockhead! didn't I order you to deny me to every body?

Oak. Yes, your honour; and so I would, but I was just stepped into the back-parlour to play a game at all-fours with our landlady's daughter; and, while we were wrangling about the cards, the little boy let the gentleman up unknown to us.

Man. Well, be more careful for the future: stand at the stair-foot, and, at your peril, keep all that ask for me from coming up.

Oak. Must no one come up to you, sir?

Man. No man, sir.

Oak. A woman, an't like your honour?

Man. No woman, neither, you impertinent rascal.

Oak. Indeed, your honour, it will be hard for me to deny

a woman any thing, since we are so newly come on shore : but I'll let no *old* woman come up to you.

Man. Would you be witty ?—You become a jest as ill as you do a horse. Begone. [Exit Oakum.

Fre. Nay, let the poor rogue have his forecastle jests : a sailor cannot help them in a storm, scarce when a ship's sinking.—But what, will you see nobody ? not your friends ?

Man. Friends ! I have only one friend, and he, I hear, is not in town : nay, can have only one ; for a true heart admits but of one friendship, as of one love ; but in having that friend I have a thousand ; for he has the courage of men in despair, yet the caution and diffidence of cowards ; secrecy of the revengeful, and the constancy of martyrs ; one fit to advise, to keep a secret, to fight, to die for his friend—But words are but weak testimonies of his merit, and my esteem : I have trusted him in my absence with the care of the woman I love, which is a charge of so tender, so delicate a nature——

Fre. Well, but all your good thoughts are not for him alone, I hope !—Pray what do you think of me for a friend ?

Man. Of you ! Why, you are a latitudinarian in friendship ; that is, no friend ; you will side with all mankind, but suffer for none ; you are, indeed, like my Lord Plausible, the pink of courtesy, and therefore have no friendship.

Fre. No ! that's very odd doctrine, indeed.

Man. Look you, I am so much your friend that I would not deceive you ; and therefore must tell you, not only because my heart is taken up, but according to your rules of friendship, I cannot be your friend.

Fre. Why, pray ?

Man. Because you will say he that is a true friend to a man is a friend to all his friends : but you must excuse me ;

I cannot wish well to a pack of coxcombs, sharpers, and scoundrels, whom I have seen you treat, I know not how often, as the dearest friends in the world.

Fre. What, I suppose you have observed me in the park, and at the coffee-house, doing the business of the several places! But could you really think I was a friend to all those I bowed to, shook hands with, and received in open arms?

Man. You told them you were; nay, and swore it too; I heard you.

Fre. Ay, but when their backs were turned, did not I tell you the greater part of them were wretched, infamous fellows, whom I despised and hated?

Man. Very true; but what right had I to suppose you spoke your heart to me, who professed deceiving so many?

Fre. Nay, if you are such a precise adherer to matter of fact, it is in vain to argue with you; yet surely you would not have every man wear his opinion upon his sleeve, and find fault and quarrel with all that he cannot in his conscience approve.

Man. I would have every man speak truth, and neither act the part of a sycophant or a coward.

Fre. Yet, pray, sir, believe the friendship I offer you real, whatever I have professed to others. Try me, at least.

Man. Why, what would you do for me? However, spare yourself the trouble of professing; for, go as far as you will—here comes one will say as much at least——

FIDELIA enters.

Don't you love me dev'lishly, too, my little volunteer? as well as he or any man?

Fide. Better than any man can love you, my dear captain: as well as you do truth and honour, sir: as well——

Man. Nay, good young gentleman, enough for shame ! Sure you forget that I am an unsuccessful man ; that I have met with nothing abroad but losses and disappointments ; and am like to find nothing at home but frowns and vexation ! Why do you follow me then, flatter my vanity now ; since, so far from being able to befriend you, I stand in need of a patron myself ?

Fide. I never followed reward or preferment, sir, but you alone ; and, were you this instant to embark on the most hazardous expedition, I would cheerfully risk my life for the bare pleasure of serving with you.

Man. Nay, hold there, sir ; did not I see you, during the engagement, more afraid——

Fide. Yet do me justice, sir : when we took to our long-boat, on your giving orders to sink the ship, did I shew any signs of dread or weariness ; though the waves broke over us on every side, and the night was so dark ?

Man. Ay, ay, you were in haste to get to land ; the apprehension of death made you insensible of danger, and so you were valiant out of fear.

Fide. Well, sir, 't is in vain for me to avow my sentiments, since you are determined not to believe me ; but one day or other, perhaps——

Fre. Poor lad ! you bring tears into his eyes : consider his youth and inexperience, and make some allowances.

Man. What, does he cry ?—No more, you milk sop !—Dry your eyes : I will never make you afraid again ; for of all men, if I had occasion, you should not be my second ; and when I return to sea——

Fide. You will not leave me behind.

Man. Leave you behind ! Ay, ay, you are a hopeful youth for the shore only ; you have a smock-face, and an officious readiness about you : you may get yourself recom-

mended to some great man, by flattering his valet-de-chambre, or, who knows, some liquorish old woman, or wanton young one, may take a fancy to you, allow you a conditional annuity, and make your fortune that way.

Fide. Sure, sir, you are industrious to find yourself reasons for an aversion to me: do you think then I am capable of being the despicable wretch you describe?

Man. Why, don't I know you to be a coward, sir; a wretch capable of any thing?

Fide. Yet, consider, sir; do not turn me off to beggary and ruin: when I came to you, I told you I was helpless and friendless.

Man. Very well, sir—I will provide you with half a score friends, which will help you a little—in the mean time begone; go! you will fare better in any place than with me.

Fide. I can fare well no where, lost as I am; I pursue happiness, but at every turn I meet complicated misery.—
[*Aside.*] [Exit.]

OAKUM enters.

Oak. There's a woman below, an please your honour, who scolds and bustles to come up, as much as a seaman's widow at the Navy-office; she says her name's Blackacre.

Man. That fiend!

Fre. The widow Blackacre, that litigious she-pettifogger, who is at law and difference with all the world! I wish I could make her agree with me in a church. She hath three thousand pounds a year jointure, and the care of her son—that is, the destruction of his estate!

Man. The lawyers, attornies, and Solicitors, have three thousand pounds a year, while she is content to be poor to make other people so; for she is as vexatious as her father was, the great Norfolk attorney——

Frt. Ay, the devil take him! I am four hundred pounds a year out of pocket by his knavish practices on an old aunt of mine; though indeed there was suspicion of a false deed of conveyance; I once had a design of suing the widow upon it, and something I will now think of seriously—but, hang her! she won't pretend to know me!

Man. Go to her, can't you? When she's in town she lodges in one of the inns of court, where she breeds her son, and is herself his tutoress in law-French: but bid her come up; she is Olivia's relation, and may make me amends for her visit, by giving me some account of her.

Mrs. BLACKACRE and JERRY enter.

Mrs. Black. I never had so much trouble with a judge's door-keeper, as with your's: you should consider, Captain Manly, this is term time, and folks have something else to do, besides waiting for admittance to people they have business with.

Man. Well, well, a truce with your exclamations, and tell me something about your cousin. How does Olivia?

Mrs. Black. Jerry, give me the subpoena.—It was by mere chance I heard of your being in town, and you are my chief witness: you can't imagine how my cause——

Man. Damn your cause! when did you see Olivia?

Mrs. Black. I am no visitor, captain, but a woman of business: or, if ever I visit, 'tis only the Chancery-lane ladies towards the law; and none of your lazy, good for nothing, fashionable gill-flirts. Many a fine estate has been lost in families for want of a notable stirring woman, to rumage among the writings: but come, sir, we have no time to lose, and since you won't listen to me, I desire you may hear my son a little; let him put our case to you; for,

if the trial comes on to-day, it will not be amiss to have your memory refreshed, and your judgment informed, lest you should give your evidence improperly.—Jerry!

Jer. What's the matter with you now?

Mrs. Black. Come, child, put our case to Captain Manly—Nay, don't hold down your head and look like a fool; for you can do it very well if you please.

Jer. I wish I may be hanged if I ever knew such a woman as you are in my life! I wonder you are not ashamed to make one an antic before strangers this way!

Mrs. Black. Jerry, Jerry! don't be perverse, but lay down the bags, and speak out like a good child, when I bid you. Lord, sir, it would do you good to hear him sometimes. Why don't you begin?

Jer. Psha! you are always in such a hurry, there's no such thing as doing nothing for you. What case must I put?

Mrs. Black. Our case that comes on to-day in the Common Pleas: you know well enough, but you will be stubborn! Pray, captain, mark him.

Jer. Hem! hem!—John a Stiles—

Man. You may talk, young lawyer, and put her case, if you think proper; but I shall no more mind you than I would your mother, if I was in your case, when she bid me do any thing to make a fool of myself.

Jer. Look you there now, I told you so.

Mrs. Black. Never mind him, Jerry, he only says that to dash you: go on! Bless my soul, I could hear our Jerry put cases all day!

Jer. John a Stiles—no—there are first, Fitz, Pere, and Ayle; no, no, Ayle, Pere, and Fitz—Ayle is seized in fee of Blackacre; John a Stiles disseizes the Ayle; Ayle makes claim, and the dissesors die—Then the Ayle—no, the Fitz—

Mrs. Black. No, the Pere, sirrah!

Jer. Oh, the Pere—ay, the Pere, sir, and the Fitz—No, the Ayle—No, the Pere and the Fitz.

Man. Damn Pere, Ayle, and Fitz, sir!

Mrs. Black. No, you are out, child. Take notice of me, captain—There are Ayle, Pere, and Fitz:—Ayle is seized in fee of Blackacre; and being so seized, John a Stiles disseizes the Ayle: Ayle makes claim, and the disseizor dies; then the Pere enters. The Pere, sirrah, the Pere!—And the Fitz enters upon the Pere, and the Ayle brings his writ of disseizen in the Post, and the Pere brings his writ of disseizen in the Pere, and—

Man. 'Sdeath, Freeman, can you listen to this stuff?

Mrs. Black. Hold, sir! I must serve you; [*Gives a paper, which he throws away.*] you are required, sir, by this to give your testimony—

Man. I'll be forsworn, to be revenged of you. [*Exit.*

Mrs. Black. Get you gone for an unmannerly fellow! But the service is good in law, so he must attend it at his peril. Come, Jerry, I had almost forgot we are to meet at the master's before eleven. Let us mind our business still, child.

Jer. Well, and who hinders you?

Fre. Nay, madam, now I would beg you to hear me a little—A little of my business.

Mrs. Black. I have business of my own, sir, calls me away.

Fre. My business would prove your's too, madam.

Mrs. Black. What, 'tis no Westminster-hall business! would you have my advice?

Fre. No, faith; 'tis a little Westminster Abbey business: I would have your consent.

Mrs. Black. Fye, fye! to me such language, sir! and in the presence of my dear minor here.

Jer. Ay, ay, mother, he would be taking livery and seizen of your jointure, by digging the turf; but I'll watch his waters, and so you may tell him. Come along.

[*Exeunt Jerry and Widow.*]

FIDELIA enters.

Fide. Dear Mr. Freeman, speak to the captain for me.

Fre. Where is he?

Fide. Within, sir.

Fre. Sighing and meditating, I suppose, on his darling mistress. He would never trust me to see her—is she handsome?

Fide. I am not a proper judge.

Fre. What is she!

Fide. A gentlewoman, I believe; but of as mean fortune as beauty. You know, sir, the captain made early choice of a sea life, to which the particularity of his disposition afterwards attached him. But some time since he determined to quit the navy; and, having conceived a violent passion for this lady, was about to marry and retire with her into the country.

Fre. And what prevented him?

Fide. The offer of a ship to go against the enemies of his country: however, when he came home again the treaty was to be concluded; and, in the mean time, he left his intended wife ten or twelve thousand pounds, lest any thing should happen to him whilst he was abroad.

Fre. He has left her in the care of some friend, has he not? Pray do you know any thing of him?

Fide. Nothing further than that his name's Varnish, and he's a man in whom the captain puts the greatest confidence.

Fre. But if this Olivia be not handsome, what the devil can he see in her?

Fide. He imagines her, I suppose, the only woman of truth and sincerity in the world.

Fre. No common beauties, I must confess——

Fide. But, methinks, he should have had more than common proofs of them, before he trusted the bulk of his fortune in her hands.

Fre. Why, did he leave the sum you mention actually in her custody?

Fide. So I am told.

Fre. Then he shewed love to her, indeed——But I'll go plead with him for you, and learn something more of this wonderful fair one. [Exit.

Fide. Was ever woman in so strange, so cruel a situation? As long as I have worn this disguise, I cannot look at myself without astonishment; but when I consider that I have run such lengths for a man who knows not that I love him, and if he did know it, would certainly reject my passion, I am startled indeed. At the time I formed the bold resolution of going with him to sea, I was sensible his affections were engaged to another: Why then did I embark in so rash an adventure? because I loved; and love is apt to buoy itself up with false hopes; he left the object of his desires behind: he took me with him; and from that favourable circumstance, I suffered myself to be cheated with a thousand fond imaginations.—Here he comes, and I must avoid him. Oh, fortune, fortune! I have been indiscreet; yet surely I may be punished for my indiscretion with too great severity. [Exit.

MANLY enters in his uniform, followed by FREEMAN.

Man. 'Sdeath! 'tis past eleven o'clock, and I should have been abroad before nine! But this comes of being

pestered with a pack of impertinent visitors.—Well, I am going out, and shall not return all day.

Fre. What, I suppose you are going to pay your devoirs to some great man now?

Man. And why should you suppose that?

Fre. Nay, faith, only because I think 'tis what you ought to do; and I know 'tis what those sort of people expect.

Man. Well, but if they expect it from me, they shall be disappointed; I have done nothing to be afraid of, that I need solicit their interest by way of a screen; and I leave those to dance attendance who are more supple, and can play the Parasite better. If they want, let them come to me—No, I am going at present where I dare swear I shall be a welcome guest; and where I ought to have gone last night, indeed;—but I came to town too late for her regular hours.

Fre. Oh! I guess where you mean; to the lady I have so often heard you talk of. Methinks I would give a good deal to see this phenomenon. She must needs be mistress of very extraordinary charms to engage a person of your difficult disposition.

Man. The charms of her person, though in them she excels most of her sex, are her meanest beauties: her tongue, no more than her face, ever knew artifice: she is all sincerity; and hates the creeping, canting, hypocritical tribe, as I do; for which I love her, and I am sure she hates not me; for as an instance of her inviolable attachment, when I was going to sea, and she found it impracticable to accompany me, she insisted upon my suffering her to swear, that, in my absence, she would not listen to the addresses of any other man; which oath——

Fre. You thought she would keep!

Man. Yes, for I tell you she is not like the rest of her sex, but can keep her promise though she has sworn it.

Fre. Ha, ha, ha!

Man. You doubt it then! Well, I shall be at her house in an hour; come to me there; the volunteer will shew you the way; and we'll try how long your infidelity will be able to resist conviction.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Dressing-Room. OLIVIA, ELIZA, and LETTICE enter.

Olivia.

Oh! horrid, abominable! Peace, Cousin Eliza, or your discourse will be my aversion—But you cannot be in earnest, sure, when you say you like the filthy world!

Eliz. You cannot be in earnest, sure, when you say you dislike it! Come, come, Cousin Olivia, I will never believe that a place which has such a variety of charms for other women should have none for you!—Pray, what do you think of dressing and fine clothes?

Oli. Dressing! it is of all things my aversion: I hate dressing: and I declare solemnly—Mercy on us! Come hither, you dowdy—Heavens! what a figure you have made of my head to-day!—Oh, hideous! I can't bear it! Did you ever see any thing so frightful?

Eliz. Well enough, cousin, if dressing be your aversion.

Oli. It is so; and for variety of rich clothes, they are more my aversion.

Lett. That's because you wear them too long, madam.

Oli. Insatiable creature! I take my death I have not worn this gown above three times; and I have made up six or seven more within these two months.

Eliz. Then your aversion to them is not altogether so great?

Oli. Alas! cousin, it is for my woman I wear them.

Eliz. But what do you think of visits—balls?

Oli. Oh! I detest them!

Eliz. Of plays?

Oli. I abominate them—Filthy, obscene, hideous things!

Eliz. What say you to the opera in winter, and Ranelagh and Vauxhall in summer?—or, if these want attractions to engage you, what say you to the court?

Oli. The court, cousin! the court!—my aversion! my aversion of all aversions!

Eliz. Well, but pr'ythee——

Oli. Nay, don't attempt to defend the court; for if you do, you will make me rail against it.

Eliz. To come nearer the point then—pray what do you think of a rich young husband?

Oli. Oh, rueful!—Marriage!—What a pleasure you have found out!—I nauseate the very thoughts on't.

Let. Mayhap, ma'am, my lady would rather like a generous, handsome, young lover!

Oli. What do you mean, Mrs. Impertinence, by talking such stuff in my hearing? A handsome young lover! A lover indeed! I hate men of all things; and I declare solemnly, I would not let one into my doors.

A Footboy enters.

Boy. Madam, here's the gentleman to wait on you.

Oli. On me, you little blockhead! Do you know what you say?

Boy. Yes, ma'am, 'tis the gentleman that comes every day to you.

Oli. Hold your tongue, you little heedless animal, and get out of the room. This country boy, cousin, takes my music-master, mercer, and spruce milliner, for visitors.

[*Novel speaks within*

Lett. No, madam, 't is Mr. Novel, I am sure, by his talking so loud; I know his voice too, madam.

Oli. You know nothing, you stupid creature! You would make my cousin believe I receive visits. However, if it be your Mr. ———

Lett. Mr. Novel, madam ———

Oli. Peace, will you! I'll hear no more of him ——— But, if it be your Mr. ——— I cannot think of his name again — I suppose he followed my cousin hither.

Eliz. No, cousin, I will not rob you of the honour of the visit: it is to you, cousin, for I know him not.

Oli. Nor I neither, upon my honour, cousin! Besides, have I not told you that visits, and the business of visits, flattery and detraction, are my aversion? — Do you then think I would admit such a coxcomb as he; the scandal-carrier of the whole town! more impudently scurrilous than a party libeller, who abuses every person and every thing, and piques himself upon his talents for ridicule!

Eliz. I find you do know him, cousin; at least have heard of him.

Oli. Yes, now I remember, I have heard of him.

Eliz. Well, but if he is such a dangerous coxcomb, for Heaven's sake let him not come up! tell him, Mrs. Lettice, your lady is not at home.

Oli. No, Lettice, tell him my cousin is here, and that he may come up: for, notwithstanding I detest the sight of him, you may like his conversation; and I would not be rude to you in my own house. Since he has followed you hither, let him come up, I say.

Eliz. Very fine! Let him go and be hang'd, I say, for me! I know him not, nor desire it. Send him away, Mrs. Lettice! [Exit Lettice.

Oli. Upon my word, she shall not; I must disobey your commands, to comply with your desires. Mr. Novel!—Mr. Novel!

NOVEL enters.

Nov. I beg ten thousand pardons, madam! perhaps you are busy; I did not know you had company.

Eliz. Yet he comes to me, cousin.

Oli. Chairs there!—Pray, sir, be seated.

Nov. I should have waited on you yesterday evening, according to appointment; but I dined at a place where there is always such a profusion of good cheer, and so hearty a welcome, that one can never get away, while one has either appetite or patience left—You know that surfeiting piece of hospitality, Lady Autumn? Ha, ha, ha! the nauseous old fury at the upper end of her table—

Oli. Revives the ancient Grecian custom of serving up a death's head with their banquets! Oh, gad; I detest her hollow cherry cheeks! She looks like an old coach new painted, affecting an unseemly smugness, while she is ready to drop in pieces.

Nov. Excellent and admirable simile, upon my soul! But do, madam, give me leave to paint her out to you a little, because I am intimately acquainted with the family.—You must know she is horridly angry if I don't dine at her house three times a week.

Oli. Nay, for that matter, any one is welcome to partake of her victuals who will be content to listen to her stories of herself when she was a young woman, and used to go with her fat Flanders mares, in her father's great gilt chariot, to take the air in Hyde Park.—Oh, cousin, I must tell you—

Nov. What, madam! I thought I was going to tell the lady; but perhaps you think nobody has wit enough to draw characters but yourself, in which case I have done.

Oli. Nay, I swear, you shall tell us who you had there at dinner.

Nov. With all my heart, madam, if you will condescend to listen to me.

Oli. Most patiently, sir: pray speak.

Nov. In the first place, then, we had her daughter, whom I suppose you have seen.

Oli. Seen! oh, I see her now! the very disgrace to good clothes, which she always wears to heighten her deformity, not mend it; for she is still most splendidly gallantly ugly! and looks like an ill piece of daubing in a rich frame.

Nov. Very well, madam! Have you done with her? And can you spare her a little to me?

Oli. If you please, sir.

Nov. In my opinion she is like——

Oli. She is, you would observe, like a great city bride; the greater fortune, but not the greater beauty, for her dress.

Nov. Yet, have you done, madam?

Oli. Pray, sir, proceed.

Nov. Then she——

Oli. I was just going to say so—she——

Eliz. I find, cousin, one may have a collection of all one's acquaintances' pictures, at your house, as well as at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, with this difference only, that his are handsome likenesses: to say the truth, you are the first of the profession of portrait painters I ever knew without flattery.

Oli. I draw from the life, cousin; paint every one in their proper colours.

Eliz. Oh! cousin, I perceive you hate detraction!

Oli. But, Mr. Novel, who had you besides at dinner?

Nov. Ladies, I wish you a good morning!

Oli. 'Psha! how can you be so provoking? Nay, I take my death you shall not go till you tell us the rest of the company! [*Stopping Novel, who rises.*] Come, sit down again: I long to hear who your men were; for I am sure I am acquainted with some of them.

Nov. We had no men there at all, madam.

Oli. What! was not Sir Marmaduke Gimcrack with you? —I'll lay fifty pounds on't! for I know he is courting one of her ladyship's crooked nieces.

Nov. Pray, ma'am, let me go.

Oli. Nay, I know another of your company, I hold you a wager of it.—Come, my Lord Plausible dined with you too, who is, cousin——

Eliz. You need not tell me what he is, cousin; for I know him to be a civil good-natured gentleman; who talks well of all the world, and is never out of humour.

Oli. Hold, cousin, I hate detraction: but I must tell you he is a tiresome, insipid coxcomb; without either sense to see faults, or wit to expose them; in fine, he is of all things my aversion, and I never admit his visits beyond my hall.

Nov. No! he visit you; damn him! he's never admitted to any one but worn-out dowagers, and superannuated maidens, who want to be flattered into conceit with themselves; he has often strove to scrape acquaintance with me, but I always took care——

Lord PLAUSIBLE enters.

Hah! my dear, my dear lord! let me embrace you.

Eliz. Well, this is pleasant!

L. Plau. Your most faithful, humble servant, generous

Mr. Novel; and, madam, I am your eternal slave, and kiss your fair hands, which I had done sooner, according to your orders——

Oli. No excuses, my lord, I know you must divide yourself; your company is too general a good to be engrossed by any particular friend.

Eliz. You hate flattery, cousin!

L. Plau. Oh lord, madam, my company! your most obliged, faithful, humble servant!——But I might have brought you good company indeed; for I parted just now at your door with two of the most sensible, worthy men.

Oli. Who were they, my lord?

Nov. Who do you call the most sensible, worthy men?

L. Plau. Oh, sir, two of the brightest characters of the present age; men of such honour and virtue. Perhaps you may know them—Count Levant, and Sir Richard Court-Title.

Nov. Court-Title! Ha! ha! ha!

Oli. And Count Levant! How can you keep such a wretch company, my lord?

L. Plau. Oh, seriously, madam, you are too severe; he is highly cared for by every body.

Oli. Carest, my lord! why he was never three times in any company in his life, without being twice kicked out of it.

Nov. And for Sir Richard!——

L. Plau. He is nice in his connections, and loves to choose those he converses with.

Oli. He loves a lord indeed——

Nov. Or any thing with a title——

Oli. Though he borrows his money, and never pays him again. Nay, he carries his passion for quality so far, that they say the creature has an intrigue among them; and

half starves his poor wife and family, by keeping up a correspondence with that overgrown piece of right honourable filthiness, Lady Bab Clumsey.

L. Plau. Oh, madam, he frequents her house because it is the tabernacle-gallant, the meeting-house for all the fine ladies and people of fashion about town.

Nov. Mighty fine ladies! There is first——

Oli. Her honour, as fat as a hostess!

L. Plau. She is somewhat plump, indeed! a woman of a noble and majestic presence.

Nov. Then there's Miss what d'ye call her.——

Oli. As sluttish and slatternly as an Irishwoman bred in France.

L. Plau. She has a prodigious fund of wit; and the handsomest heel, elbow, and tip of an ear, you ever saw.

Nov. Heel and elbow! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Elix. I find you see all faults with lover's eyes, my lord!

L. Plau. Oh, madam, your most obliged, faithful, very humble servant to command!

Nov. Pray, my lord, are you acquainted with Lady Sarah Dawdle?

L. Plau. Yes, sure, sir, very well, and extremely proud I am of the great honour; for she is a person whose wit, beauty, and conduct, nobody can call in question.

Oli. No!

Nov. No!—Pray, madam, let me speak.

Oli. In the first place, can any one be called handsome that squints?

L. Plau. Her eyes languish a little, I own.

Nov. Languish! Ha, ha, ha

Oli. Languish!

Elix. Well, this is to be borne no longer: Cousin, I have some visits to make this morning, and will take my leave.

Oli. You will not, sure; nay, you shall not venture my reputation, by leaving me with two men here.—You'll disoblige me for ever——

Eliz. If I stay!—Your servant. [Exit.]

MANLY and Footboy, speaking within.

Man. Not at home! Not see me! I tell you she is at home, and she will see me——Let her know my name is Manly.

Boy. Well, but your honour, my lady's sick, I dare not go to her.

Man. Well, then I'll go to her.

Boy. Help, Mrs. Lettice!—Help!—Here's the sea-gentleman.

Oli. What noise is that?

MANLY enters.

Man. My Olivia! 'Sdeath, what do I see? In close conversation with these!

Oli. Hah, Manly! this is somewhat unexpected; however, I am prepared for him. [Aside.]

L. Plau. Most noble and heroic captain, your most obliged, faithful, very humble——

Nov. Captain Manly, your servant.

Man. Away!—Madam——

Oli. Sir!

Man. It seems, madam, as if I was an unwelcome guest here: your footboy would hardly allow me admittance; at first he told me you were not at home. Indeed I did not expect to find you in such good company.

Oli. I suppose, sir, my servant had orders for what he did.

L. Plau. Perhaps, madam, Mr. Novel and I incommode

you; the captain and you may have something to say, so we'll retire.

Oli. Upon my honour, my lord, you sha'n't stir; the captain and I have nothing to say to one another, assure yourself, nor ever shall: 'tis only one of his mad freaks, for which you will make allowances; salt-water lovers, you know, will be boisterous now and then.

Man. Confusion!

Nov. We shall have a quarrel here presently: I see she's going to use him damnably.

Man. What am I to think of this behaviour, madam;

Oli. Even what you please, good captain.

Man. And is this the reception I meet with after an absence—

Oli. And is this behaving like a gentleman, to force into a lady's apartment contrary to her inclinations? I suppose it is Wapping breeding: however, you are fitted for your ill manners.

Man. I am fitted for believing you could not be fickle, though you were young; could not dissemble love, though it was for your interest; nor be vain, though you were handsome; nor break your promise, though to a parting lover. But I take not your contempt of me worse than your keeping company with and encouraging these things here.

Nov. Things!

L. Plau. Let the captain rally a little.

Man. Yes, things. Dare you be angry, you thing?

Nov. No, since my lord says you speak in raillery.

Man. And pray, madam, let me ask you, what is it you find about them to entertain you? For example, this spark here: is it the merit of his fashionable impudence, the briskness of his noise, the wit of his laugh, or his judgment and fancy in his solitaire, that engages your esteem?

Nov. Very well, sir! Egad, these captains of ships—

Man. Then, for this gentle piece of tame courtesy—

Oli. Good, jealous captain, no more of your—

L. Plau. No, madam, let him go on; for perhaps he may make you laugh; and I would contribute to your pleasure any way.

Man. Obliging coxcomb!

Oli. No, noble captain, you cannot think any thing would tempt me more than that heroic title of yours, captain! for you know we women love honour inordinately.

Nov. Ha, ha, ha! I cannot hold; I must laugh at you, faith, Mr. Manly!

L. Plau. And i' faith, dear captain, I beg your pardon, and leave to laugh at you too; though I protest I mean you no hurt—

Man. Peace, you buffoons! And be not you vain, that these laugh on your side; for they will laugh at their own dull jests; but no more of them: for I will only now suffer this lady to be witty.

Oli. You would not have your panegyric interrupted! I go on then to your honour. Is there any thing more agreeable than the pretty oddity of that? Then the greatness of your courage! which most of all appears in your spirit of contradiction: for you dare give all mankind the lie; and your opinion is your only mistress, for you renounce that too, when it become another man's.

L. Plau. Ha, ha, ha!

Nov. Ha, ha, ha!

Man. Why, you impudent pitiful wretches! You presume, sure, upon your effeminacy, to urge me; for you are all things so like women, it might be thought cowardice to chastise you.

Oli. No hectoring, good captain!

Man. Or perhaps you think this lady's presence secures you; but have a care, she hath talked herself out of all the respect I had for her; and, by using me ill before you, hath given me a privilege of using you so before her—Therefore begone immediately.

Nov. Begone! What!

L. Plau. Nay, worthy, noble, generous captain!

Man. Begone, I say!

Nov. Well, madam, we'll step into the next room; you will not stay long with him I suppose. Fal, la!

[*Exeunt Lord Plausible and Novel.*]

Oli. Turn hither your rage, good Captain Swaggerhuff! and be saucy with your mistress, like a true captain: but be civil to your rivals and betters; and do not threaten any thing but me here; no, not so much as my windows: do not think yourself in the lodgings of one of your suburb mistresses beyond the Tower.

Man. Do not you give me the cause to think so! For those less infamous women part with their lovers, just as you did from me, with unforced vows of constancy, and floods of willing tears; but the same winds bear away their lovers and their vows; and for their griefs, if the credulous, unexpected fools return, they find new comforters, such as I found here; the mercenary love of these women, too, suffer shipwreck with their lover's fortune: you have heard chance has used me indifferently, and you do so too. Well, persevere in your ingratitude, falsehood, and disdain; be constant in something; and I promise to be as just to your real scorn as I was to your feigned love; and henceforward despise, loath, and detest you most faithfully.

Oli. I'll wait upon you again in a minute.

[*Exit.*]

FIDELIA and FREEMAN *enter.*

Fre. How now, captain!

Man. Pray keep out of my way; don't speak to me.

Fide. Dear sir, what's the matter?

Man. Blockhead!—Oh, Freeman! I have been so cheated, so abused, by this perfidious—

Fre. Nay, sir, you need not tell us, for we have been for some time within hearing in the next room. But now, I hope, you will act as becomes you.

Man. I hope so too.

Fide. Do you but hope it, sir?

Man. She has restored my reason with my heart.

Fre. But there are other things, captain, which, next to a man's heart, he would not part with, and methinks she ought to restore too; I mean your money and jewels, sir; which I understand she has.

Man. What's that to you, sir?

Fre. Pardon me; whatever belongs to you, I have a share in, I am sure, which I will not lose for want of asking; though you may be too generous, or too angry now to do it yourself.

Fide. Nay, then I'll make bold too—

Man. Hold, you impertinent, officious—How have I been deceived!

OLIVIA enters.

Fre. Madam, excuse this liberty—but we are Captain Manly's friends, and have accidentally been witnesses to your disagreement.

Oli. And what am I to infer from thence, sir?

Fre. Why then, madam, there are certain appurtenances to a lover's heart, called jewels, which always go along with it.

Fide. And with lovers, madam, have no value, but from the heart they come with—Our captain's, it seems, you

scorn to keep, much more those worthless things without it, I am confident.

Oli. I understand you, gentlemen. Captain, your young friend here has a very persuading face, I must confess; but you might have asked me yourself for those trifles you left with me, which—Hark you a little—for I dare trust you with a secret, you are a man of so much honour I am sure—I say then, considering the chance of war, the danger of the seas, and being in doubt whether you might ever return again, I have delivered your jewels and money to—

Man. Whom?

Oli. My husband.

Man. Your husband!

Oli. Ay, my husband. For, since you could leave me, I am lately and privately married to one, who is a man of so much honour and experience, that I dare not ask him for your things again to restore them to you, lest he should conclude you never would have parted with them to me on any other score than the exchange of my virtue; which, rather than you would bring into suspicion—

Man. Triumphant impudence!—Married!

Oli. There's no resisting one's destiny, or love, you know.

Man. Damnation!

Oli. Oh, don't swear! 'Tis true, my husband is now absent in the country; however, he returns shortly; therefore I beg, for your own ease and quiet, and my reputation, you will never see me more.

Man. I wish I never had seen you!

Oli. You may perceive by this how great a dependance, I have upon your friendship: I am sensible every man might not be talked to in the same manner; but your uncommon delicacy of thinking will, I am sure, feel for a person in my present circumstances.

Man. True, perfect woman! and if I could say any thing more injurious to you, I would—Leave me; go!—lest I should be tempted to do something, which may hereafter make me think as meanly of myself, as I do now of you.

Oli. Sir, it is a maxim with me never to stay in any place where my company is disagreeable: I obey you with all willingness—Young gentleman, your servant. [*Exit Olivia.*]

Footboy enters.

Boy. Here are Madam Blackacre, and Major Oldfox, to wait on my lady.

Man. Do you hear that, let's begone before he comes.

Fre. Excuse me; the widow is the very game I have in view; I wanted just such an opportunity to attack her—And if you will take my advice, you'll stay too; if it be only to see this Major Oldfox, her supernumerary 'squire, her occasional gentleman-usher: he is a character, I assure you.

Man. No; confound him, he is as bad as the cockatrice herself, whom I would avoid as a sinking ship, and the whole sex, for ever. [*Exit with Fidelia.*]

Mrs. BLACKACRE, JERRY, and Major OLDFOX enter.

Mrs. Black. 'Tis an errant sea-ruffian! I thought he would have pushed us down, Major. Jerry, where's my paper of memorandums? Give it me. So! where's my Cousin Olivia, now—my kind relation?

Fre. Here's one that would be your kind relation, madam.

Mrs. Black. Hey-day, who is this wild rude fellow?

Jer. Why, don't you know him?—It's the man that wanted to fall aboard you at Captain Manly's this morning.

Old. Pray be civil to the lady, Mr. ———, she is a person of quality—A person, that is, no person——

Fre. Yes, but she is a person that is a widow. Be you civil to her; because you are to pretend only to be her 'squire, to arm her to her lawyer's chambers: but I will be impudent and forward; for she must love and marry me.

Mrs. Black. Marry come up; you saucy, familiar puppy! —marry you! Gad, forgive me! now-a-days every idle young rascal, with a laced waistcoat, and a bit of black ribbon in his hat, thinks to carry away any widow of the best degree.

Old. No, no, soft! you are a young man, and not fit; besides, others have laid in their claims before you.

Fre. Not you, I hope!

Old. Why not I, sir? Sure I am a much more proportionable match for her than you, sir: I, who am a person of rank and means in the world, and of equal years——

Mrs. Black. How's that? you unmannerly—I would have you to know I was born in Ann secun Georgii prim——

Old. Your pardon, madam, your pardon; be not offended——But I say, sir, you are a beggarly younger brother; twenty years younger than she; without any land or stock, but your great stock of impudence: therefore what pretensions can you have to her?

Mrs. Black. And what pretensions have you, Major? Go and solicit a brevet for Chelsea-Hospital, you old mummy! Air yourself there under the cloisters; smoke your pipe, and make love to your laundress: you shall have a widow with three thousand pounds a year, you shall, you barbarous brute!

Old. How, madam!

Fre. Ha, ha, ha!

Jer. Well said, mother! use all suitors thus for my sake.

Mrs. Black. A senseless, impertinent, quibbling, scribbling, feeble, paralytic, conceited, ridiculous, pretending old bell-weather!

Jer. Hey! brave mother, for calling names!

Mrs. Black. Would you make a caudle-maker, a nurse of me? Can't you be bed-rid without a bed-fellow? Won't your swan-skins, furs, flannels, and the scorched trencher, keep you warm there? Would you make me your Scotch warming-pan, with a plague to you!

Jer. Ay, you old Fobus, and you would be my guardian, would you? to take care of my estate, that half of it should never come to me, by letting long leases at pepper-corn rents?

Mrs. Black. If I would have married an old man, 'tis well known I might have married an earl.—Nay, what's more, a judge, and been cover'd the winter nights with the lamb-skins, which I prefer to the ermines of nobles. And do you think I would wrong my poor minor here, for you?

Fre. Your minor is a chopping minor—Heaven bless him!

Old. Your minor may be a major of horse or foot for his bigness: and it seems you will have the cheating of your minor yourself.

Mrs. Black. Pray, sir, bear witness: cheat my minor! I will bring my action of the case, for the slander.

Fre. Nay, I would bear false witness for you now, widow, since you have done me justice, and thought me the fitter man!

Mrs. Black. Fair and softly, sir! 'tis my minor's case more than my own: and now I must do him justice on you. And, first, you are to my knowledge—for I am not unacquainted with you—a debauched, drunken, hectoring, lewd, gaming spendthrift.

Jer. There's for you, bully-rock!

Mrs. Black. A worn-out rake at five and twenty, both in body and estate: a cheating, lying, cozening, impudent fortune-hunter! and would patch up your own broken income with the ruins of my jointure.

Jer. Ay, and make havoc of our estate personal, and of all our gilt plate—I should soon be picking up our silver-handled knives and forks, spoons, mugs, and tankards, at most of the pawnbrokers between the Hercules' Pillars and Boatswain at Wapping. And you would be scouring among my trees, and making them play at loggerheads, would you?

Mrs. Black. I would have you to know, you pitiful, paltry, lath-backed fellow, if I would have married a young man, it is well known I might have had any young heir in Norfolk; nay, the hopefullest young man this day at the King's-Bench bar! I, that am a relict, and executrix of known plentiful assets and parts, who understand myself and the law; and would you have me under covert baron again? No, sir, no covert baron for me.

Fre. Well, but my dear madam——

Mrs. Black. Fie, fie! I neglect my business with this foolish discourse of love——Jerry, child, let me see a list of the jury; I am sure my Cousin Olivia must have some acquaintance among them: but where is she?

Fre. Will you not allow me one word, then?

Mrs. Black. No, no, sir: have done, pray.

Old. Ay, pray, sir, have done, and don't be troublesome; since you see the lady has no occasion for you, though you are a younger brother—ha, ha, ha!

[Exeunt.]

ACT III. SCENE I.

A View of St. James's Park. MANLY enters alone, musing.

Manly.

How irksome is restraint to a mind naturally averse to hypocrisy! Yet, I who used to give birth to my thoughts as freely as I conceived them; I, who was wont to speak without reserve to every body, am now endeavouring even to deceive myself.—That ungrateful woman, in whom I placed such unlimited confidence! into whose keeping I had given my heart, my judgment—nay, my very senses!—'Sdeath! had a man treated me ill, resentment would at once have cancelled regard, and revenge have prevented vexation: but here I am obliged to side with my enemy, and increase the injuries she hath done me, by loving her in spite of them.

FIDELIA enters.

Fide. Sir, have I liberty to speak to you?

Man. What would you say?—You see this is no place to talk in: don't trouble me now.

Fide. I shall not detain you long, sir; and you may bear to hear two or three words from me, though you do hate me as you have often said.

Man. I must confess I hate a flatterer:—Why will you not learn to be a man, and scorn that mean, that sneaking vice.

Fide. Perhaps I am to blame, sir; but I do not come to offend you at present—I have something to tell you, if you will vouchsafe to listen to me.—Who do you think I met on the other side of the Park just now, sir?

Man. Nay, how should I know? Pr'ythee, kind importunence, leave me. You are as hard to shake off as that obstinate, effeminate mischief, love!

Fide. Love, sir!—did you name love?

Man. No, no! Pr'ythee, away! Begone!—I had almost discovered my shame, my weakness; which must draw on the derision even of this boy.

Fide. There is something, sir, that makes you uneasy:—Am I not worthy to be acquainted with the cause?

Man. What cause, child? Nothing makes me uneasy: a little involuntary thoughtfulness, that's all. But you say you met somebody in the Park just now—who was it?

Fide. Why, really, sir, on second thoughts, I don't know how to mention her name to you: but it was that creature, that wretch, that——

Man. That who?—Who is it you are going to speak of now, that you preface your discourse with all this bitterness of invective?

Fide. Why, sir, that monster of ingratitude, Olivia!

Man. Olivia!

Fide. Yes, sir.

Man. Well, and how?

Fide. Nay, not much, sir; only she called me over to her as I was crossing the Mall, and would fain have had me gone home to her house, where she had something to communicate: but for my part I could hardly bear to look at her, much less afford her an opportunity for conversation—Pray, sir, do n't you think she has a most forbidding countenance?

Man. I can't say I ever observed it.

Fide. Then her shape is by no means one of the best.

Man. Indeed!

Fide. But I hope, sir, your eyes are now as open to her

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Act III.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

Sc. I.



Robert del.

Anderton sc.

File: Love Sir did you mean love?
London: Printed for G. Cawthorne, British Library, Strand, July 1798.

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deformities as they must be to her perfidiousness; and that you will never think of her any more—But why do I mention that?—You never can think of her without bringing your good sense—nay, your reputation, in question: for, after such unworthy, such infamous usage—

Man. Confusion!—Who told you, sir, she had used me ill?

Fide. Why, sir, was not I a witness?

Man. 'Sdeath, sirrah, if ever I hear you mutter such a word again, I'll shake you into atoms! How am I exposed and rendered contemptible?—It is enough that I think I have nothing to complain of—I am perfectly well satisfied with her conduct—Do you mark?—perfectly well satisfied.

Fide. Very well, sir! I have done.

Man. Oh, the curse of being conscious of a weakness one is ashamed to divulge!—Hold, sir! come hither—Have you resolution enough to endure the torture of a secret? for such to some is insupportable.

Fide. I would keep it as safe as if your dear precious life depended upon it.

Man. It concerns more than my life—my honour.

Fide. Doubt me not, sir.

Man. And do not discover it by too much fear of discovering—D'ye mark?—But, above all things, take care that Freeman find it not out.

Fide. I warrant you, sir.

Man. Then I know I love Olivia; dote on her. Her ingratitude and disdain, like oil thrown into the flames, have only made my passion burn the fiercer.

Fide. Oh, heavens!

Man. You say she met you just now, and wanted you to go home with her, in order to communicate something: who knows what that might be?—Perhaps she hath repented her

behaviour this morning—Perhaps it was the result of passion, of affectation, or was meant to try me: in short, I can assign a thousand reasons for it besides that one of change in her affections; for, I am sure, once she loved me.

Fide. Hang her, dissembling creature!—Love you! It was only for her interest then.

Man. Well, well, no matter; but I tell you I know better: I am sure once she did love me.

Fide. Indeed, sir, she never cared for you.

Man. Will you have done, sir?

Fide. Besides, sir, did she not tell you she was married?

Man. Well, well, but that might be artifice, too—'Sdeath, sir! will you listen to me, or go about your business, and never let me see you more?

Fide. I beg pardon, sir.

Man. I say you shall go to her house, and hear what this business is.

Fide. I go to her house, sir? I would sooner go—

Man. No hesitating, sir! I say you must; she lives but in the next street.

Fide. Indeed, sir, I can't go there.

Man. No, sir!

Fide. Besides, sir, consider: you scorned her this morning.

Man. I know not what I did this morning: I dissembled this morning.—What! are you not gone yet?

Fide. Well, sir, now I think on't, I will go: for, perhaps this is a sting of conscience; and she hath a mind to make some recompence for her ill usage of you, by returning your money and jewels: methinks I fain would have them out of her hands.

Man. Stay, sir; if she drops the least hint of any such thing, I charge you come away immediately, and do not stay even to give her an answer.

Fide. Well, but dear sir, only let me speak one word—

Man. I'll not hear a syllable: you'll find me in Westminster-hall: begone! [Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

Westminster-Hall. A Crowd of People, Serjeants, Counsellors, and Attorneys, walking busily about. Mrs. BLACKACRE in the middle of half a dozen Lawyers, JERRY following with a green bag.

Mrs. Black. Offer me a reference, you saucy blockhead! Do you know who you speak to? Are you a solicitor in Chancery, and offer a reference? Mr. Serjeant Ploddon, here's a fellow has the impudence to offer me a reference!

Plod. Who's that has the impudence to offer a reference within these walls?

Mrs. Black. Nay, for a splitter of causes to do it!

Plod. No, madam, to a lady learned in the law as you are, the offer of a reference were to impose upon you.

Mrs. Black. No, never fear me for a reference, Mr. Serjeant—But come, have not you forgot your brief? Are you sure you shall not make the mistake of—Hark you—

Major OLDFOX and Bookseller enter.

—— Come, Mr. Splitcause, pray go see when my cause in Chancery comes on; and go speak with Mr. Quillet in the King's Bench, and Mr. Quirk in the Common Pleas; and see how matters go there.

Old. Madam, I have the pleasure to bid you good-morrow once again; and may all your causes go as prosperously as if I myself was to be the judge of them.

Mrs. Black. Sir, excuse me, I am busy and cannot answer

compliments in Westminster-hall. Go, Mr. Splitcause, and come to me again at the bookseller's.

Old. No, sir, come to the lady at the other bookseller's. If you please, madam, I'll attend you thither.

Mrs. Black. And why to the other bookseller's, major?

Old. Because, madam, he is my bookseller.

Mrs. Black. To sell you lozenges for your cough, or salve for your corns? What else can a major deal with a bookseller for?

Old. Madam, he publishes for me.

Mrs. Black. Publishes! oh, that's true, I forgot——You are an author.

Old. Now and then, madam, now and then—the good of one's country, you know.

Mrs. Black. And pray, major, what are your books upon?

Old. Deign you, madam, to peruse one of them? There is a thing of mine lately come out; and I'll assure you a certain great person, whom I presented it to, was pleased to pay me a compliment in the Court of Requests——

Book. Do you want any thing, madam? We have all the plays, magazines, and new pamphlets——

Mrs. Black. Have you the Lawyer's Magazine?

Book. We have no law books at all, madam.

Mrs. Black. No! you are a pretty bookseller!

Old. Come hither, young man—Has your master got any of my last pamphlet left?

Book. Yes, sir, we have got enough of them; we never had above two or three called for, besides what you took away yourself.

Old. May be so, may be so: the thing is not sufficiently known yet. Well, let me see a couple [*gets them.*] It is entitled, madam, “A Letter to a certain great Man on the present Posture of Affairs:” and if you will condescend to accept one, *ex dono auctoris.*

Jer. Hoh, hoh, hoh! [*Laughing at a pamphlet behind.*]

Mrs. Black. Jerry, what have you got there?

Jer. Why—nothing—

Mrs. Black. Nothing! Let me look at that book—Rochester's Jests! A very pretty study, truly. Give him the Young Clerk's Guide.

Old. No, no, give the young gentleman my Treatise upon Military Discipline.

Mrs. Black. Away with such trash! Do you want to send him to the devil headlong? I should have him teasing me to-morrow or next day to buy him an ensign's commission. I would as lief he should read a play!

Jer. Well, and what if I did? There's very good discourse to be got out of plays, for all you.

Mrs. Black. Sirrah, sirrah! Don't let me hear such a word out of your mouth. What has spoiled most of the attornies' clerks in London, but turning critics, and running every night to the playhouses at half price? and do you want to follow their example?—Stay, Jerry—Is not that Mr. What d'ye call him goes yonder, he that offered to sell me a suit in chancery for five hundred pounds, for an hundred down, and only paying the clerk's fees?

Jer. Yes, that's he.

Mrs. Black. It is the cheapest thing I ever heard of—Stay here, and have a care of the bags, while I go and talk with him—Have a care of the bags, I say— [*Exit.*]

Jer. Have a care of the fiddle's end, I say: Gad, I am sure I lead a dog's life with you.

FREEMAN enters.

Fre. So, here's a limb of my widow, that used to be inseparable from her: she can't be far—How now, major!

Old. What do you mean by that, sir?—Who are you, sir? What are you, sir?

Fre. Nay, my dear Don Cholerick, do n't snap my nose off.

Old. Sir, you are a very impertinent fellow, sir!—And, sir—'Squire, where's your mother?

Jer. Oh, what you were so intent upon reading your works, you let her give you the slip, did you? Well, yonder she is, talking to that weazle-face man in the big wig. Hobble after her.

Old. An unmannerly, insignificant, ignorant—I shall take notice of you, Mr. Sea-Lieutenant, I shall take notice of you! [Exit.]

Jer. Look you, master, I'll tell you what it is—I'll buy that book of choice sayings from you, if so be you'll take half a crown for it, and stay till lawyer Splitcause comes to lend me the money to pay you.

Fre. Lend you! Here, I'll pay him—I am sorry, 'squire, a man of your estate should want money.

Jer. Why, I am not at age yet, you must understand.

Fre. At age! You are at age already, man, to have spent a fortune: there are younger than you, who to my knowledge have kept their girls these three years; ruined half a dozen tradesmen, and lost as many thousand pounds at play. But what is the reason, 'squire, that you will not give your consent to my marrying your mother?

Jer. Why, you would not be such a fool, would you?

Fre. Why, I would not be a fool if I could help it: but has not she a good jointure?

Jer. A good jointure! If she has, she knows what to do with it: she will let nobody have a finger in the pie but herself, I can tell you that. Come a little this way.—Why, you would not believe what an old plague my mother is; she'll never allow me sixpence in my pocket, so that I am ashamed to go into company, because I have not wherewithal to call for a glass of wine and do as the rest do.—And, for a wench!—I was but making a little fun with our laundress's

daughter upon the stair-case, the other night, and she threatened to send the poor girl to Bridewell.

Fre. Sure!

Jer. Upon my word she did! Oh, you don't know what a woman she is.

Fre. Well, but 'squire, methinks this might easily be remedied: if I was you, I would go to law with her.

Jer. Law! Lord help your head! Why she is as big a lawyer as any in our inn; and would not desire better sport—Besides, I would not care to do that, for fear she should marry out of spite, and cut down my trees. I should hate to see my father's wife kist and slopt by another man—and our trees are the purest, nice, shady, even twigs!

Fre. Come, 'squire, let your mother and your trees, fall, as she pleases, rather than go of this fashion all your life—But you shall be able to deal with her the right way.

Jer. Nay, if I had any friend to stand by me, I would shew a trick worth two of it, I can tell you that.

Fre. Suppose I was to be your friend! Look you, 'squire, I don't use to profess much; however, there's a trifle for your present occasions.

Jer. Oh, Lord, sir! two guineas! Do you lend me this? Is there no trick in it? Well, sir, I'll give you my bond for security.

Fre. No, no, you have given me your face for security; any one would swear that you do not look like a cheat: and come to me whenever you will, and you shall have what money you please of me.

Jer. By my soul he's a curious fine gentleman! but may I depend upon you? Will you stand by me?

Fre. Here's my hand.

Jer. That's enough. Never stir, but the next cross word my mother gives me, I'll leave her directly, and come

off to you—But now I have got money, I'll go pay the man at the gate two shillings I owe him, for I believe the poor soul wants it; and his wife has been two or three times at chambers to dun me.

[Exit.]

MANLY, Mrs. BLACKACRE, and Major OLDFOX enter.

Man. Confound your cause! Can't you lose it without me? which you are like enough to do, if it be, as you say, an honest one: I'll suffer for it no longer.

Mrs. Black. Nay, but captain, you are my chief witness—And Mr. Splitcause tells me we are pricked down for the next hearing. Lord! methinks you should take pleasure in walking here, as half you see now do; for they have no business here I assure you.

Man. Yes, but I assure you then their business is to persecute me——'Sdeath! I can't turn, but one puppy or other has me by the sleeve, with impertinent enquiries or fulsome compliments: I have been acting the sign of the salutation this half hour, with a bowed body, and my hat off, to one of your law serjeants yonder; while he was loading me with professions of service and friendship, though in all probability he cared not if I was at the devil; and I was wishing him hanged out of my way.

Mrs. Black. Well, well, sir, compose yourself a little, and every thing shall be made agreeable.—Jerry, why Jerry!—Mercy on me, major, did not you leave my son here?

Old. Yes, madam, but perhaps the young gentleman is stept aside.

Mrs. Black. Jerry Blackacre!

Fre. Your son will be here in a minute, madam, he's only just gone out of the hall about a little business.

Mrs. Black. Out of the hall! Gad's my life!—Out of the hall!

Fre. Don't make yourself uneasy, madam; I'll answer for it he'll come to no mischief.

Mrs. Black. Sir, I don't direct my discourse to you—But I'll so rate this careless jackanapes—Come along, major, and help me to look for him.

[*Exeunt all but Manly and Freeman.*]

Fre. Well, sir, how have you past your time since you come here? You have had a great deal of patience, sure.

Man. Patience, indeed! for I have drawn but one quarrel and two law-suits upon me.

Fre. The devil! How could you quarrel here?

Man. How could I refrain?—But let's go off, for I see another quarrel coming upon me.

Fre. What do you mean?

Man. Ask no questions, but walk this way,

NOVEL enters.

Nov. Hey! captain! Captain Manly!

Man. What now?

Nov. I beg pardon; but I thought it was you.—Have you been in the house hearing the debates? What are they upon to-day?

Man. Considering what passed between you and me, at our last interview, sir, I cannot help being a little astonished at the familiarity of this salutation.

Nov. Pho, pho! a mere trifle. Don't mention it—I; has been a very fine morning, sir.

Fre. Yes, sir, the weather has been tolerable,

Nov. It was very cold yesterday.

Fre. I believe it might, sir.

Nov. Captain, what do you think brings me to Westminster-hall?

Man. Why, I suppose somebody has thrashed you lately

for being impertinent, and you are come to take the law of them.

Nov. No, that's not it. But I suppose you have heard—

Man. Heard what?

Nov. Why, that I am to be play'd the devil with; costs and damages, and the Lord knows what.

Man. No, really, I have heard nothing about the matter; but what is it? though I am sure you are in the wrong before you tell me,

Nov. Why, you must know, sir—Ha, ha, ha?—Upon my soul, it is so ridiculous a circumstance, that I can hardly think of it without laughing.—You must know, sir, I was some time ago at the house of a considerable merchant in the city, where a certain lady's name was brought up; and in the course of the conversation I happened to mention some things which I had heard, and which all the world believe to be fact, egad! However, as you may guess, I did not imagine the discourse would have gone any further.

Fre. But I suppose the lady had a friend in company, sir.

Nov. Oh, sir! I know how the matter came about now.—Yes, yes, the woman of the house was her sister-in-law, which I never dreamt of: the intolerable Jezebel went and told her every thing that passed: an attorney came the next morning to serve me with a copy of a writ; and now they have brought me here to make me prove my words, as they call it.

Man. And pray, sir, what was it you said of the lady?

Nov. Nothing, nothing!—some story that I heard about her cuckolding her husband; that was all.

Man. I hope she may trounce you severely; nay, and I hope what you said of her was true; that you may be made the more glaring example.

Nov. Well, but my dear creature! how can you be so inhuman to any person that never did you any injury?

Man. Because I would have such mischievous triflers as you are punished for your tattling and effeminacy: I would have you taught the difference between satire and defamation, and learn some other topic for your nonsensical conversations, besides the character and conduct of the absent; you male members of the tea-table, who are, if possible, worse enemies to women, than they are to one another.

Nov. Well, upon my honour, this is pleasant! especially from you, who are remarkable for abusing all the world.

Man. Do you hear him, Freeman? Plain-dealing may well be in disrepute, when 'tis confounded with impudence and scandal: but if I stay here any longer, I find I shall be tempted to beat him.

Fre. Nay, pr'y thee, don't leave us.

Man. Yes, yes, I must; I shall bring myself into another scrape else: besides, I see a person just now come into the hall that looks for me—Stand out of the way. [*Exit.*]

Nov. This is a sad brutish fellow, sir; I wonder you will keep him company.

Fre. Why, faith, sir, I don't know how it is; I think I am bewitched to him, for my part; and yet, hang him! he has some good qualities too, when one comes to be thoroughly acquainted with him.

Nov. Ay, sir! Pray what may they be, for I never could find them out.

Fre. Why, I think 't is generally agreed, sir, that he has a tolerable good understanding.

Nov. Why, really I have heard people say so; and yet to me he has always appeared the stupidest animal breathing.

Fre. Then as to courage—It must be allowed he is brave.

Nov. He is quarrelsome, if you please; but his bravery,

I fancy, will admit of some dispute. You have heard, no doubt, of his late affair with the French.

Fre. Ay, sir; what of that?

Nov. Why, I should not care to have my name mentioned as the author of such a thing, but I assure you there are some very odd reports fly about; and this, I believe, you may depend upon, that he will be brought to a court-martial for his behaviour on that occasion.

Fre. I am glad to hear this, sir, with all my heart; for you must know I happened to be a partner in the action you mention.

Nov. Were you, sir?

Fre. Yes, faith; but I was ignorant till now of the dangerous situation we were in; however, I am extremely obliged to you for your intelligence, as I dare swear the captain will be——

Nov. Yonder goes my attorney—I'll just speak two or three words to him, and be back with you again in an instant.

Fre. Hold, sir! we must not part so. You must go along with me, sir, and tell this story to Captain Manly.

Nov. Sir, I have not time at present—I—there's a gentleman beckons me owes a thousand pounds, and goes out of town to-morrow morning.—Mr. —— [Exit.

Fre. Ha, ha, ha!—Well, we shall meet again.

JERRY BLACKACRE enters,

Fre. How now, squire, what's the matter?

Jer. Nothing: I don't care; nothing's the matter: but if ever I go home again with her, I wish I may never stir! You said you would stand by me.

Fre. Well, and so I will. Who has injured you?

Jer. Why, my mother: she caught me at the place there changing the money you gave me, and flew at me like any

mad, and pulled my hair, and called me all the names that ever she could think of—But if I don't be up with her! you will see!—and if you won't take me with you, I'll go for a soldier.

Fre. Take you with me, 'squire!—Do you desire to go with me?

Jer. Yes, it's all my desire.

Fre. How shall I act in this affair? gad, 'twill be a good stroke towards my making something of the widow in earnest; at least of getting my right out of her hands. [*Aside.*] Well, 'squire, I'll tell you what, if you are really serious—

Jer. Oh, Lord! yonder she is coming in at the gate with that old fellow: if you will come, come away; for I won't stay any longer to be beat and abused by her.

Fre. Nay, since that's the case, have with you, my boy.

Jer. Ay, and now let's see how she'll be able to help herself. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Changes to the Gate of Westminster-Hall. MANLY and FIDELIA enter from within, and on the opposite side Mrs. BLACKACRE and Major OLDFOX.

Mrs. Black. A villain! a rascal! I'll teach him better manners than to talk saucily to his mother!—These are pretty doings, are they not? My son flies in my face, and when I go to correct him for it, he tells me truly he'll leave me, and go to the mate of your ship, who has offered to take him.

Man. Well, and what's that to me? You must tie your calf up, if you are afraid of his being stolen.

Mrs. Black. But which way did he run, Major?—May be he is gone to that seducing villain already; and he has got my writings with him, all that concerns my estate, my jointure, my husband's deed of gift, and the evidences for all my suits now depending.

Man. I'm glad of that; for if you have lost your evidence your cause can't go on, and I am at liberty.

Old. Mr. Jerry went off in a great passion, madam—I hope he won't commit any rash action, to do himself a mischief.

Mrs. Black. No, no, I know him better than so; he will never be *felo de se* that way: but he may go choose a guardian of his own head, and so be *felo de ses beins*; for he has not chosen one yet.

Man. Which I hope he may, with all my heart.

Mrs. Black. Oh, do you so, sir? then it seems you are in the plot. Well, look to't; I'll play fast and loose with you all yet, if there be law, and my miner and writings are not forthcoming, I'll bring my action of *detinue* or *trover*—but I'll first go and seek——

Man. Well, I sha'n't stay here any longer.

Mrs. Black. Stir a step, stir a step, at your peril, till the courts are broke up, and I'll serve you with a rule of contempt.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Black. and Major Oldfox.*]

Man. Now, sir, go on.—You have been with Olivia, you say.

Fide. Yes, sir, I have seen and spoke with her.

Man. Well, and she received you kindly?

Fide. Kinder than you would think, sir.

Man. That's well—Come now, let me hear what she said to you.

Fide. Said to me, sir!

Man. Ay, what was her business with you? Come, come!

Why don't you speak? You are so tedious!—What was it she had to communicate?

Fide. Modesty, sir, prevents my entering into particulars; I need only tell you, that her business with me has proved of the most extraordinary kind; I am so shocked at the thoughts of her behaviour, I cannot say more.

Man. Confusion!

Fide. I assure you, sir, I would not impose upon you by the forgery of a falsehood, and cannot wrong her by any report of her, she is so wicked.

Man. Wicked! 'Sdeath! had she the impudence!

Fide. Impudence! Oh, sir!

Man. But what!—How did she accost you?

Fide. When I came to the house, sir, I was conducted into her dressing-room, where I found her alone: and I took it for granted, she would have begun immediately with talking of you, and your late difference with her: but, instead of that, sir, I had hardly sat down, when she gave me to understand she had desired to see me on my own account only; and was so bold, and so forward—

Man. But in what terms did she express herself?

Fide. Her tongue, I confess, was silent, sir; but her eyes conveyed such things—

Man. Eyes!—Eyes!—What, then you have only had eye kindness from her; and your vanity has helped you in this construction so much to the lady's disadvantage?

Fide. Not so, sir.—At first, indeed, her eyes chiefly were the interpreters of her thoughts; but, finding they spoke a language I could not, or would not understand, she threw off the restraint, made a *tendre* of her passion in direct terms; and, in short, sir, offered to prostitute that love to me, at half an hour's acquaintance, which you have deserved whole years in vain.

Man. I'll not believe it—It's a damn'd lie of your own contrivance ; come, I know 't is a lie.

Fide. I am sorry you should think so, sir ; but, however unlikely it may appear, I can give you proof.

Man. Proof !

Fide. Yes, sir ; for I have seemed half consenting to her solicitations, and made a kind of promise to pay her a visit this night, at twelve o'clock, when the family shall be asleep.

Man. Hah !

Fide. For which purpose she has shewn me a back way into her apartment, where a lamp always burns ; for she will have no light in her chamber, because her woman lies in an adjoining closet—Nay, more, sir ; she has given me the key of the garden, to let myself in with, which I have brought off.

Man. The key of the garden ! Let me see it.—I know it well ; and have a thousand times gone by the passage you mention to our private interviews : I imagined it led to paradise, and an angel of purity inhabited there ; but I must think of that no more.—Did she say any thing to you of this husband of her's ?

Fide. Yes, sir, she is actually married, and her husband gone out of town ; but she expects him very soon ; and that, I suppose, made her more urgent with me to come to-night.

Man. And can you think of disappointing a lady upon such an occasion ?

Fide. I, sir !—I should disappoint her more by going.

Man. How so ?

Fide. Her impudence and infidelity to you, sir, has made me loath her.

Man. Well, sir, but I say the lady shall not be disappointed.

Fide. Not disappointed, sir!—If ever I go near her again, may you think me as false to you as she is; hate and renounce me.

Man. Well, well, if you won't, leave the matter to me? I'll take care——

Fide. You, sir!—You take care, sir!—Pray give me that odious key again, and let me return it with the contempt, the detestation——

Man. No, sir; this key is the instrument of revenge, which fortune hath put into my hand; and, by Heaven, I'll make use of it.

Fide. Revenge, sir!—what revenge? Disdain is best revenged by scorn; and faithless love by loving another.

Man. Perhaps it may, where the object has once been esteemed; but I now begin to think I had never any share in her affections; and therefore I'll take another method.

Fide. And what is your design, sir?

Man. Not a word more: here's Freeman coming towards us: we will disengage ourselves from him as soon as we can, and talk of this affair further.

FREEMAN enters.

Fre. The most whimsical accident has happened to me here to-day, captain; the most unexpected, unaccountable—Ha, ha, ha!

Man. What, the great boy has rose in rebellion against the tyranny of his widow-mother, and put himself under your protection! Have a care, Freeman—though she is a fiend, and I wish her at the devil, we are still to have a regard to justice.

Fre. Then we are to do ourselves justice, sure! which, I promise you, is all the use I shall make of the squire's revolt in my favour. Where shall we dine?

Man. I was just thinking of it—Where can we dine?

Fre. Will you go to the King's Arms?

Man. Why, I don't much care if I do; but it must be upon one condition.

Fre. Name it.

Man. That you shall not attempt to pin yourself upon me after dinner; I must positively have the whole evening at my own disposal; for my young volunteer and I have particular business.

Fre. That's sufficient, sir; you know you always make your own terms with me.

Man. Come then, young gentleman, lead the way.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Manly's Lodgings. MANLY enters in a surtout coat, followed by FIDELIA.

Manly.

THEN Freeman betrayed no marks of surprise at being told I was gone abroad so early! and you are positive he had not the least suspicion of my being out all night!

Fide. I believe not, sir.

Man. So much the better. I have been sitting at the coffee-house these three hours, lest knocking at the door at an unseasonable time might alarm the family. Help me off with my coat—and now shut the door, and bolt it, that no body may come in upon us unawares.

Fide. Heigh ho!

Man. What's the matter with you?

Fide. Nothing, sir.

Man. You have been crying !

Fide. I have not been very well, sir.

Man. Come, you are a good lad ; don't let your spirits sink ; I'll be your friend ; you shall fare as I do ; let that content you.

Fide. I desire no better, sir.

Man. Take the pen and ink, and sit down there—I am now convinced that what you told me yesterday was truth ; and Olivia is the vilest, and most profligate of her sex.

Fide. Are you convinced, sir ?—Are you indeed convinced ? Then I hope——

Man. Speak softly—I suppose I need not tell you where I have been !

Fide. Sir !

Man. I say, I suppose I need not tell you where I have been since we parted. I have been with Olivia, and she has bestowed on me a thousand caresses, which I returned with seemingly an equal ardour.

Fide. Lord, sir, I am vastly sick of a sudden !

Man. You are a coward—What ails you ?

Fide. I don't know, sir ; I never was so oddly taken in my life ; but it will away again.

Man. Listen to me, then, and be surprised yet more—I have passed myself upon Olivia for you !

Fide. For me, sir !

Man. Yes—Darkness, and the particularity of our situation, favoured the deceit ; and I was cautious not to deceive her, by speaking but little, and that softly ; and leaving her this morning before it was light.

Fide. Surely, sir, you will never go near this abominable woman more !

Man. That we'll consider of—In part, my revenge is satisfied,

Fide. Well, sir, what are your commands with me?

Man. Hear me. I would have you go immediately and write Olivia a very tender billet-doux; deplore the necessity which forced you from her this morning, so much against your inclination: and appoint another meeting with her, at her own house, this evening, as soon as it shall be dusk.

Fide. Out of revenge, I suppose, sir!

Man. It is so—for I intend to go there.

Fide. Sir, my life is devoted to your service; but, however meanly you may think of me, I cannot descend so low as to the infamous office you would lay upon me. Excuse me, sir, I cannot act the part of a pander.

Man. Your principles of honour I do not dislike, if they are sincere; but I tell you you are mistaken in this matter.

Fide. Indeed, sir, I am not; I see all plain enough; but, upon my knees, I beg, if you have the least regard for yourself, renounce this woman, give her up, and never—

Man. What am I to think of your behaviour? Sure you would have me believe you love her yourself; which, indeed, I have all along suspected.

Fide. Indeed, sir, it is all my concern for your safety.

Man. Methinks you might trust that to my care—but, once for all, I desire I may have no more impertinent disputing or advice—you have reason to know I am unalterable.

Fide. Sir, you must give up either Olivia or me!

Man. Why so, sir? What have you and Olivia to do with one another?

Fide. Well, sir, let me hear your commands.

Man. I have already told them to you—I would have you write this letter, to make the appointment: you shall keep it in person; and when you have been with her some time,

I will come in at the back door, which you shall purposely leave open, and catch you together.

Fide. Well, sir, and what then?

Man. Why then, sir, I will upbraid her falsehood, confront her impudence, boast of the triumph I have had over her, and never see her more.

Fide. And is this really all you intend, sir?

Man. All.

Fide. I think you can have no kindness left for Olivia now, sir; I think you can't—You don't love her the least bit, captain, do you?

Man. Love her! Damn her! I think of her with abhorrence.

Fide. Then I will go and write the letter directly, sir.

Fre. [*Speaks within.*] Well, well, I will introduce you.

Man. Do so—and open the door, for I think I hear Freeman in the next room. [*Exit Fidelity.*]

FREEMAN and Major OLDFOX enter.

Fre. Captain, here's a gentleman who is ambitious of being ranked amongst the number of your acquaintance. This, sir, is Major Oldfox, at once the votary of Mars and Apollo, and equally an ornament to the pen and the sword.

Old. Sir, I am your most——

Man. What do you mean by bringing the old fool to me? Why will you, Freeman, take these liberties?

Fre. Excuse me; upon my soul I could not avoid it.—The captain is a whimsical man, major; but I suppose you know his humour!

Old. Ay, ay, I have heard, and like him the better. Captain, I honour you, you are a great man, sir:—your late behaviour against the enemy has proved you such, and I shall be proud of being better known to you: as Mr. Free-

man has intimated, I am an humble admirer of the arts, and now and then throw my thoughts upon paper: *nequeo dormire*, as the poet says.

Man. And what then, sir?

Old. Nay, good captain, take me along with you.—I suppose you would not be displeased to have the particulars of your late action laid in a proper manner before the public; and if so, I should be glad to drink a bottle, and have a little discourse with you about it—That's all, sir.

Man. Ha, ha, ha!

Old. He's an odd man, Mr. Freeman.

Fre. But ingenious, major.

Old. Ay, ay. Pray, captain, do you ever read the Royal Chronicle?

Man. No.

Old. Nor the Imperial Magazine?

Man. Neither.

Old. That's much, that's much indeed; neither the Royal Chronicle, the Imperial Magazine, nor!—There are often very excellent pieces make their appearance in those publications, Mr. Freeman.

Fre. So there are, major, so there are—and I believe I can guess to whom the public is indebted for a good many of 'em! What say you? Eh!—Don't I know the signum—three stars and a dash?

Old. No, Mr. Freeman, no upon my honour, sir!—That was my mark formerly; but now all my things are signed Philanthropos.

Fre. You are not author of that soliloquy in blank verse, in the papers the other day?

Old. What! an address to the land-carriage fish-office?

Fre. Ay.

Old. Why, did you like it?

Fre. As good as Milton!

Old. Mr. Freeman, my dear soul!—I am extremely sorry that any thing should happen between us; but as I said before, I hope that is all forgotten; and you will henceforward look upon me as your friend. It was I that writ it. But mum!—between ourselves.

Man. Hark you, old gentleman, it seems you have taken it into your head you can write, and are turned author; shall I tell you what I once said to an acquaintance of mine, who was possessed of the same unaccountable whim?

Old. Well, sir, and what was that?

Man. Why, faith, I told him very plainly he was making himself an ass.

Old. Mr. Freeman, I shall be glad to see you at my house, to eat a bit of mutton with me, and to have a little conversation about a matter I shall tell you.—Sir, your servant! [Exit,

Fre. You took a very sure way to get rid of an author, by advising him not to write. But you are grown a very early man, sure; I was here two hours ago, and was told you were gone out.

Man. Ay, and I should have staid out if I had known what company you intended to bring me.

Fre. As to that, don't be angry; the major, you must know, is the widow's harbinger, who is coming in pursuit of her son; and he and I having a little quarrel, I had a mind to make it up with him, by doing what he said he would consider as the greatest obligation—introducing him to you.

Man. Well, and what have you done with your charge?

Fre. Stay, and you shall see: I have rigged him out with the remains of my shipwreck'd wardrobe: he has been under your sea valet-de-chambre's hands. By Jupiter!

that's his mother's knock at the door. Stay, and I'll fetch him.

Man. No—you know I cannot easily laugh; but I desire once more you will take care, and bring yourself into no disagreeable circumstances by this business. [Exit.

SCENE II.

Covent-Garden Piazza. Mrs. BLACKACRE and Major OLDFOX enter.

Old. But will you not walk in, madam?

Mrs. Black. No, major, no; I shall not put my foot into his house, since I have not my lawyer with me. I called on Counsellor Quillet, but he's attending a trial for an assault.

Old. Well, but madam, this is a strange place to transact business in.

Mrs. Black. Major, you are an ignoramus! do you know, that as I have no search-warrant, execution, or other legal authority, if I was to go into his house, he might bring his writ for a forcible entry on the premises. I served a person so once myself.

Old. Well, madam, I have sent the servant to call him out; and that you mayn't think the time long till he comes, I'll just read you over a little fancy that came into my head this morning.

Mrs. Black. Lord, major, how can you trouble me with such cursed stuff, when you see how I am perplexed and plagued here?

Old. Nay, in troth, I must have your opinion of a satire I am going to publish; it is a lash for the Reviewers; in which I give such a character——

Mrs. Black. Nay, if you talk of characters, look at my

last suit in Chancery, which gives such a character of my adversary, makes him as black as the very devil.

Old. Then here's the outlines of what I once intended for a pamphlet. The Coffee-house Man's Case on the late rise of News-papers, humbly addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

FREEMAN and JERRY enter.

Mrs. Black. What do I see?—Jerry Blackacre, my minor, in red breeches! Oh, Jerry, Jerry! have I lost all my good inns of court breeding upon you, then? and will you go breeding yourself at coffee-houses and bagnios?

Jer. Ay, ay! what then? perhaps I will, and what's that to you? Here's my guardian and tutor now, that I am out of your huckster's hands.

Mrs. Black. How! you have not chose him for your guardian yet?

Jer. Yes, but I have though; and I'll do any thing he bids me, and I'll go all over the world with him, to ordinaries or bagnios, or any where else.

Mrs. Black. Do not go to ordinaries and bagnios, good Jerry!

Jer. Why, have you had any dealings there? you never had any ill by them, had you? but if I have left you, you may thank yourself, for you used me so barbarously I was weary of my life.

Mrs. Black. But consider, Jerry, you are yet but an infant; however, if you will go home with me again, and be a good child, you shall see——

Fre. I beg your pardon, madam; this young gentleman is now under my care; and it is my duty, in quality of his guardian——

Mrs. Black. Why, you villain, would you part mother

and minor? rob me of my child and my writings? but you shall find that there is law; and as in the case of ravishment of guard. Westm. the second.

Old. Well, but madam, by what I can find, this has been all the young gentleman's own doing. Come, 'squire, pray be ruled by your mother and friends.

Jer. Yes, I'll be ruled by my friends, and therefore not by my mother. I'll choose him for my guardian till I am at age—nay, may be for as long as I live.

Mrs. Black. Will you so, you wretch? and when you are of age, you will sign, seal, and deliver too, will you?

Jer. Yes, I will.

Mrs. Black. Oh! do not squeeze wax, son! rather go to ordinaries and bagnios, than squeeze wax. If thou dost that, farewell the goodly manor of Blackacre, with all its woods and underwoods, and appurtenances whatever.

Fre. Come, madam, don't afflict yourself: 't is true, this young gentleman, of his own free will, has chosen me for his guardian: however, he's not out of your power; and might I flatter myself with hopes of being in the mother's good graces——

Mrs. Black. I understand you, sir——No; if one of us must be ruined, e'en let it be him, if he won't be ruled by me.——What say you, booby, will you be ruled?

Jer. Let me alone, can't you?

Mrs. Black. Will you choose him for a guardian, whom I refuse for a husband?

Jer. Ay, to choose, I thank you! for I have taken leave of lawyering and pettifogging.

Mrs. Black. Pettifogging, you profane villain! have you so?—Pettifogging! then you shall take your leave of me, and your estate too; you shall be an alien to me and it for ever.—Pettifogging!

Jer. Oh, but if you go there, we have the deeds and settlements, I thank you! would you cheat me of my estate?

Mrs. Black. No, no; I will not cheat your little brother Bob; for you were not born in wedlock; you was——

Jer. What quirk has she got in her head now?

Mrs. Black. I say you cannot, shall not inherit the Black-acre estate: you are but my base child, and, according to law, cannot inherit it. Nay, you are not so much as a bastard eigne.

Jer. What am I then, mother, the son of a ——?

Mrs. Black. The law says——

Fre. Madam, we know what the law says—but have a care what you say! do not let your passion to ruin your son, ruin your reputation.

Mrs. Black. Hang reputation, sir! am not I a widow; have no husband, nor intend to have any?

Jer. But have you no shame left in you, mother?

Mrs. Black. No, no, sir! Come, major, let us make haste to the prerogative court. [Exeunt.]

Fre. Nay, but madam.—We must not let her go so, 'squire!

Jer. Nay, the devil can't stop her, if she has a mind to it. But I'll tell you what, master guardian-lieutenant, we will go and advise with three attornies, two proctors, two solicitors, and a sharp dog in White Friars, and sure all they will be too hard for her! for I fear, honest guardian of mine, you are too good a joker to have any law in your head.

Fre. You are in the right on 't, 'squire; I understand no law, especially that against bastards—which custom is against, I am sure; for more people get estates by being so, than lose them. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

Olivia's Lodgings. OLIVIA enters, with VARNISH booted and spurr'd, as just come off a journey.

Oli. Lord bless me, my dear! you came upon me so un-awares, you quite startled me—feel how my heart beats!

Var. Beats!—you seem startled indeed.—And yet surely you expected somebody, when you met me so kindly in the dark passage!

Oli. Why, I thought it was your step, and could not refrain from coming out of my chamber; and yet I did not know how to believe it either, because it was so much sooner than your letters bid me look for you.

Var. And yet you began with upbraiding me for having staid beyond my time.—Let me tell you, madam, this conduct is mysterious, and requires explanation.

Oli. What explanation, my soul?—you misunderstood my words. I upbraided you with having staid too long from me; and you shall never be absent so long from me again—you sha'n't indeed; by this kiss you sha'n't! But, my dearest, I have strange news to tell you—since you went, Manly's returned.

Var. Fortune forbid!

Oli. He met with the French fleet: fought, and afterwards sunk his ship. He was here with me yesterday.

Var. You did not own our marriage to him!

Oli. I told him I was married, to get rid of him; but to whom is yet a secret to all the world. And I used him so abominably ill, that his pride, I believe, will prevent his troubling me any further.

Var. I hope it has given him a surfeit of the shore, and will send him to sea again; be you sure only to keep our

great secret: in the mean time I will lead the easy fool by the nose, as I used to do; and whilst he stays, rail with him at you; and when he's gone, laugh with you at him. By that time, too, I shall have settled some affairs, which I have now on hand, and shall not care who knows of our marriage. As for the notes and jewels which he left with you, if he should want to recover them by law, you may plead a gift; but I fancy we are pretty safe as to that, for I know the particularity of his temper so well——

Oli. Yet let us be cautious, my love—Have you taken the thousand guineas, he lodged in my name, out of the banker's hand?

Var. No—where was the necessity?

Oli. The greatest in the world.—Do n't confide too much in his generosity: I am well informed a much smaller sum would be acceptable to him at present; and no doubt his necessity will make him ready enough to take money, wherever he can claim any thing like a property.

Var. I believe you are in the right, and I will take care to remove them to-morrow.

Oli. To-morrow! for Heaven's sake stay not till then; he may receive them before to-morrow. Go this night—immediately.

Var. You advise well, and I will only stay to rest myself a little.

Oli. Rest yourself when you come back. Pray, dear Varnish, don't trifle upon such an important occasion. Go this very instant.

Var. Well, well, I'll go now directly—a hackney coach will take me to Fleet-street and back again in an hour.

Oli. If you stay till midnight, no matter.—Make haste, dearest! I am impatient till you are out of the house. [*Exit Varnish.*]—I sha'n't recover myself a good while, this

unexpected visit has so flurried me?—Who could have thought of his coming—a beast!—and at so critical a juncture!—And yet if he had stayed but a few moments longer, he might have taken me still more at a disadvantage—‘My conduct is mysterious, and requires explanation.’ Sure he intends to give himself the airs of being jealous—I wish I had never married him! He’s of a cruel and dangerous temper; and had I not luckily thought of the money as an expedient to send him out again, I know not what might have happened had he and my young friend met—

FIDELIA enters.

Ah, Heavens!

Fide. I hope I do n’t frighten you, madam.

Oli. Oh, is it you?—No, no; but I’m the strangest timorous creature!—Well! you can excuse a woman’s weakness; indeed I have given you too great proofs of mine—I hope you are not one of those capricious conquerors who despise a victory for being too easily gained!

Fide. I hope, madam——

Oli. Nay, I know you will say to the contrary, and I shall believe you: though the hurry you were in to leave me, and your unkind behaviour, in hardly speaking to me, might make one of a less jealous temper suspect——

Fide. Upon my word, madam!——

Oli. I am satisfied; you will tell me, no doubt, your letter contained a sufficient apology for that; and, to convince you I desire no other, if you are as sincere as I am, I will this moment put into your possession what, in many parts of the world, will be a magnificent fortune. In short, I am ready to forsake friends, country, reputation, and fly with you——

Fide. This offer, madam, does me so great an honour—

Oli. Honour! Why will you make use of that cold expression? But methinks you look grave upon't! must I have the mortification to find that your passion is less violent than mine?

Fide. Pardon me, madam; but the violence of your passion may presage its change; and I must needs be afraid your affections would soon cool to me, since you could once grow indifferent to so worthy a gentleman as Captain Manly.

Oli. Oh, mention not his name.

Fre. Why, madam, did n't you love him?

Oli. Never. How could you think it?

Fide. Because he thought it; who is a man of that excellent understanding and nice discernment—

Oli. Hang him, untractable, surly brute! Some private reasons, indeed, made me outwardly accommodate myself to his tramontane humour; and he had vanity enough to think I liked him.

Fide. Bless my soul, madam!—Vanity!—Why, he's very well to be liked, I hope.

Oli. Ha, ha, ha!

Fide. Indeed, madam, you do n't do well to speak so disrespectfully of the captain.

Oli. Why, you dear, friendly creature, you could not be a greater advocate for him, if you were one of his mistresses stept into breeches!

Fide. His mistresses, madam! I don't know what you mean. To be sure I have great obligations to the captain, and don't like to hear him abused—but—

Oli. Come, come, let's talk no more of him, that's the best way—What say you, shall we go sit in the next room? I have prepared a little cold collation there.

Fide. Are we not better here, madam?

Oli. No, no; I'll conduct you; give me your hand.

Fide. I would rather stay where we are, if you please, madam.

Fide. Why so?

Fide. I don't know, madam; I think 'tis more airy here.

Oli. Airy! Is any thing the matter with you?

Fide. I am afraid I am going to have one of my fits.

Oli. What fits?

Fide. Oh, madam, I am very subject to fits, and sometimes lay in a trance for an hour together.

Oli. Ay!

Fide. Yes, indeed, madam; but if you'll let me alone where I am, perhaps I may not have one.

Oli. Oh, stay; I'll run into the next room and fetch you some spirits; I would not, for the world, you should be seized here. [Exit.

Fide. Mercy on us, what shall I do! I wish the captain would come and deliver me from this odious woman; she will certainly discover me if I stay much longer. I wish I was well out of the house!

OLIVIA enters.

Oli. Undone, undone!

Fide. How, madam! Where?

Oli. Ask no questions, but get out the back way as fast as you can; my husband's coming!

Fide. Your husband, madam!

Oli. Ay, ay; he came in just before you did; I thought he was gone abroad again, but I saw him this moment cross the hall, and he followed me up stairs—Oh, Heavens, here he is!—This way. [Exit.

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London. Printed for G. Cawthorn, British Library, Strand July 1792.

Fide. Hold, madam!—She has clapt the door after her, and the bolt is shot! What will become of me?

VARNISH enters.

Var. So, now I am somewhat of a more decent figure to go abroad; while the fellow has been getting me a coach, I have made a shift to alter my dress a little.—Hah! who have we here!—Nay, by the Lord you sha'n't slip by me!

Fide. Pray, sir, don't be rude.

Var. Rude, you rascal! Who are you? And what brings you into this house?

Fide. I did not come to do you any harm, sir.

Var. You came here to do no good, I am certain. But now I see who it was my wife expected, and what occasioned her extraordinary trepidation.—Damn you, sirrah! I have a mind to cut your throat. Come, draw!

Fide. Oh, pray, sir, don't draw your sword—pray, sir, don't!

Var. How, a coward! yet dare to do a man the greatest injury in the world! but your want of courage sha'n't save your life.

Fide. Hold, sir, hold! don't terrify me, and I'll satisfy you I could not injure you.

Var. Now, quickly then! What have you to say?

Fide. I am a woman, sir; a very unfortunate woman!

Var. Hah! a very handsome one, I'm sure.—It is so—But why in this masquerade?—Well, no matter.

Fide. I hope, sir, you are so much a man of honour as to let me go, now I have satisfied you.

Var. Let you go, madam!

Fide. Yes, sir. You may guess my misfortune to be love, by my disguise; and I dare swear you will not urge me further on secrets which concern my honour.

Var. Oh, no, madam, by no means—But I thought I saw my wife turn short upon the stairs just now, and run up in a great hurry before me. Has she not been with you?

Fide. Yes, sir.

Var. Well, and where is she gone?

Fide. Out of the house, I believe, sir.

Var. And why so, madam?

Fide. I know not, sir: perhaps, because she would not be forced to discover me to you; or, to guard me from your suspicions, that you might not discover me yourself.

Var. Well, madam, at any rate I am obliged to her for having left me alone with so charming a creature. Lovely, bewitching woman!

Fide. What do you mean?—Help, ho!

Var. 'Tis in vain to cry out—no one dares to help you; I am lord here.

Fide. Tyrant here!—But, if you are the master of this house, which I have taken for a sanctuary, do not violate it yourself.

Var. No, I'll preserve you in it, and nothing shall hurt you: I will be as true to you as your disguise; but you must trust me.

Fide. You don't look like a villain, sir—Help, help!

A Footboy enters.

Var. You saucy rascal, how durst you!—

Boy. I come, sir, to let you know the coach is at the door.

Var. Damn the coach!—Well, madam, I shall leave you for a little while! perhaps when I come back I shall find you in a better humour.—Here, sir, help me in with this fellow, this dishonourer of my family.

Boy. Fellow! your honour said she was a woman.

Var. No matter, sir; must you prate?

Fide. Oh, Heavens! Is there—

Var. Come, madam, since you will yield to me no other way, you shall at least be my prisoner till I have leisure to examine you further—In there, in—I will know you better before I part with you, my pretty masquerader, or you shall have more strength and cunning than I think you have.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

Eliza's Lodgings. OLIVIA, ELIZA, and LETTICE enter.

Olivia.

Ah, cousin, nothing troubles me, but that I have given the malicious world its revenge, and reason now to talk as freely of me as I used to do of it.

Eliz. Faith then let not that trouble you; for to be plain, cousin, the world cannot talk worse of you than it did before.

Oli. How, cousin! I'd have you to know before this faux-pas, this trip of mine, the world could not talk of me.

Lett. Oh Lud, madam, here is my master!

Oli. Whither shall I run? Save, protect me from him!

VARNISH enters.

Var. Nay, nay, come!

Oli. Oh, sir! forgive me.

Var. Yes, yes, I can forgive your being alone with a woman in man's clothes, but have a care of a man in woman's clothes!

Oli. A woman in man's clothes! What does he mean!

[*Aside.*]

Var. Come, come, you need not have lain out of your house for this; but perhaps you were afraid, when I was warm with suspicion, I must have discovered who she was.

Oli. Who she was! Sure he dissembles only to get me into his power; or perhaps my young spark has imposed upon him!

{Aside.

Var. Come, what's the matter with you? If I must not know who she was, I am satisfied without—Come hither.

Oli. Sure you do know her; she has told you herself, I suppose.

Var. No, I might have known her better, but I was obliged to go to the banker's; and so locked her into your chamber, with a design to examine her when I came back; but in the mean time she got away, by tying the window curtains to the balcony, by which she slid down into the street—for you must know I jested, and made her believe I should be rude with her, which she apprehended, I suppose, in earnest.

Oli. Then she got from you?

Var. Yes.

Oli. And is quite gone.

Var. Yes.

Oli. I am glad on't—otherwise you had been rude with her.—But how durst you go so far, as to make her believe you would? Let me understand that, sir! What! there is guilt in your face!—You blush too!—Nay, then I see how things have happened—Oh, you base fellow!

Elix. So, so!

Var. Nay, hear me!—Pr'ythee—I swear——

Oli. I have heard already too many of your false oaths, and vows, especially your last in the church: Wicked man! and wretched woman that I am?

Var. My dear!——

Oli. My devil!——

Var. Come, pr'ythee be appeased—and go home : I have been so uneasy all day, not knowing where to find you—I'll give you every satisfaction.

Oli. Satisfaction !

Var. Yes, do but go home, and I'll thoroughly satisfy you—and then too we'll have a fit of laughing at Manly, whom I am going to find at the King's Arms, where I hear he dined—Go, dearest, go home.

Eliz. A very pretty turn indeed, this !

Var. Now, cousin, since by my wife I have the honour and privilege of calling you so, I have something to beg of you too ; which is, not to take notice of our marriage to any person whatever, yet a while, for some reasons very important to me ; and next, that you will do my wife the honour to go home with her, and me the favour to use that power you have with her, in our reconciliation.

Eliz. That I dare promise, sir, will be no hard matter. Your servant. [*Exeunt Var. and Lett.*] —Well, cousin, this I confess was a reasonable hypocrisy ; you were the better for it.

Oli. What hypocrisy ?

Eliz. Why, this last deceit of your husband was lawful, since in your own defence :

Oli. What deceit ? I would have you to know I never deceived my husband.

Eliz. You do not understand me : I say this was an honest come off, and a good one. But what sort of a gallant must this be, who would so dextrously pass himself for a woman ?

Oli. What do you mean by a gallant, and passing for a woman.

Eliz. What do you mean ? You see your husband took him for a woman.

Oli. Whom ?

Eliz. Hey-day ! why the man he found with you ; for whom, last night, you were so much afraid ; and who you told me——

Oli. Lord, you rave sure !

Eliz. Why, did you not tell me last night ?——

Oli. I know not what I might tell you last night in a fright.

Eliz. Ay, what was that fright for ?—For a woman !——
Fie, this fooling is insipid, 't is offensive.

Oli. And fooling with my honour will be more offensive.
Did not you hear my husband say——

Eliz. Come, you need not fear, I'll keep your secret.

Oli. My secret ! I'd have you to know, I have no need of confidants, though you value yourself on being a good one.

Eliz. Admirable confidence !

Oli. Confidence ! Is this language to me ? Nay, then I'll never see your face again ! Lettice, where are you ? Let us begone from this censorious, ill woman.

Eliz. Your very humble servant, my sweet, good cousin !

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

A Tavern. MANLY and FREEMAN discovered drinking at a table.

Fre. What, then you were going to her yesterday evening.

Man. I did, as I tell you, intend it ; but, being detained on the way by an old ship-mate, just as I had got to the corner of the street, I met the volunteer, breathless, and almost frightened out of his wits, who gave me this whimsical relation of his adventure with her husband.

Fre. Whimsical indeed ! Damn it—the fellow must be an idiot !

Man. I am not sorry the affair has happened, however ; for, upon second thoughts, the discovery I have to make should be public, and before a number of witnesses—she must be made as infamous as she is guilty.

Fre. Well, I am your man at any mad work ; so here's my service to you—but I must now go look a little after my charge ; I have disposed of him in the next room, with Lord Plausible, and Mr. Novel, who have been here to day, at the expence of a young Creole, at a turtle feast.

Man. Go your ways then, I won't detain you ; but I say, you know Olivia's house, and will be sure not to let slip the hour.

Fre. I warrant you.

Man. And come strait up to her chamber, without more ado ; and bring your charge, and my fellow Oakum, and whoever else you please ; the greater your company the better. Here, take the watch——'T is now five o'clock, and, at half an hour after seven precisely——

Fre. You need not doubt my diligence ; I am an old blood, and can naturally beat up a wench's quarters that won't be civil to my friend—Sha'n't we break her windows too ?

Man. No, no ; be punctual only.

[*Exit Fre.*]

VARNISH enters.

How !—Nay, here's a friend indeed ! And he that has him in his arms can know no wants.

Var. Dear sir ! and he that is in your arms is secure from all fears whatever : nay, our nation is secure by your defeat at sea ; and the French that fought against you have proved enemies to themselves only, in bringing you back to us.

Man. Fie, fie—this from a friend ? And yet, from any other 't were insufferable. I thought I should never have taken any thing ill from you.

Var. A friend's privilege is to speak his mind, though it be ill taken.

Man. But your tongue need not tell me you think too well of me; I have found it from your heart, which spoke in actions, your unalterable heart. But Olivia is false, my friend; which I suppose is no news to you.

Var. Why, no—it is not.

Man. But could not you keep her true to me?

Var. Not for my life, sir.

Man. But could not you perceive it at all before I went?—Could she so deceive us both?

Var. I must confess, the first time I knew it, was three days after your departure, when she received the money you had left in Fleet-street, in her name; and her fears, it seems did not hinder her from counting it. You must trust her with all, like a true generous lover!

Man. And she like a mean——

Var. Jilting——

Man. Traiterous——

Var. Base——

Man. Damn'd——

Var. Mercenary strumpet!

Man. Ay, a mercenary strumpet indeed! for she made me pay her before I had her.

Var. How!—Why, have you had her?

Man. Have I!——

Var. Nay, she deserves you should report it.

Man. Report it!—By Heaven, 't is true.

Var. How!—sure not!

Man. I do not use to lie, nor you to doubt me.

Var. When?

Man. The night before last.

Var. Confusion!

Man. But, what—you wonder at it! nay, you seem to be angry too.

Var. I cannot but be enraged against her, for her usage of you; damn'd, infamous, common jade!

Man. But you do not, for so great a friend, take pleasure enough in your friend's revenge, methinks.

Var. Yes, yes, I am glad to know it, since it is so.

Man. You cannot tell who that rascal her cuckold is?

Var. No.

Man. She would keep it from you, I suppose.

Var. Yes, yes.

Man. You would laugh, if you knew but all the circumstances of my gaining her: come, I'll tell you.

Var. Damn her! I do n't care to hear any more of her.

Man. Well, you shall hear it presently, then; and, in the mean time, pr'ythee go to her, but not from me, and try if you can get her to lend me an hundred pounds of my money, which I am at present in great want of. You may, perhaps, have some influence with her; and I suppose there is no recovering it by law.

Var. Not any; think not of it; nor by this way neither.

Man. What have you in your head, that makes you seem so unquiet?

Var. Only this base impudent woman's falsehood.

Man. Oh, my dear friend, be not you too sensible of my wrongs, for then I shall feel them too with more pain, and think them insufferable.

Var. But why can't you go to Olivia yourself? methinks she that granted you the last favour, as they call it, should not deny you any thing.—I understand not that point of kindness, I confess.

Man. No, you do not understand it, and I have not time to let you know all now: but anon, at supper, we'll laugh

at leisure together at Olivia's cuckold, who took a young fellow, that goes betwixt his wife and me, for a woman.

Var. Ha!

Man. Senseless, easy rascal! 't was no wonder she chose him for a husband. She thought him, I thank her, fitter than me for that blind, bearing office.

Var. Take a young fellow for a woman, say you?—'Sdeath, 'tis impossible I could be mistaken! [*Aside.*] Sure he must be a dolt indeed!

Man. Oh, a very buzzard! Did you ever hear so ridiculous a circumstance?

Var. Never, never.

Man. Well, but, my dear friend, I must be gone immediately, in order to meet Olivia again to-night.

Var. To-night! It cannot be, sure?

Man. 'T is not two hours since I made my young man write to her for that purpose; and she appointed half an hour after seven precisely—In short, I am, and I am not to meet her.—It is a riddle, but shall be explained.

Var. But don't you apprehend the husband?—

Man. He, snivelling gull, a thing to be feared!—A husband—the tame of creatures!

Var. Very fine!

Man. But I must go to my appointment: you 'll meet me here at supper, and then we 'll have our laugh out. [*Exit.*

Var. [*Alone.*] Ay, I 'll meet with you, but it shall be at Olivia's—Sure it cannot be! she behaves so calmly, with that honest, modest assurance, it can't be true—And yet he does not use to lie—But then the woman in man's clothes, whom he calls a man—Well, but I know her to have been a woman—But then again, his appointment from her to meet with him to-night: I am distracted more with doubt than jealousy. Well, I have no way but to go home immedi-

ately, put on a riding suit, and pretend, to my wife, the same business which carried me out of town last requires me to go post to Oxford again to-night: then if the appointment he boasts of be true, 't is sure to hold; and I shall have an opportunity either of clearing her, or revenging myself on both. [Exit.

SCENE III.

Another Room in the same Tavern: Tables and Chairs. Major OLDFOX, Mrs. BLACKACRE, and afterwards Counsellor QUILLET enter.

Old. But how is it possible, madam, that you can prove your son has no right to his father's estate?

Mrs. Black. Let me alone for that, sir; I'll get a lawyer shall prove black's white, if occasion be. But suppose I prove it by his father's will; I have a will, sir; or can have one made; and how is it he can help himself?

Old. Nay, then, indeed——

Mrs. Black. Yes, yes, I'll shew the villain that he took the wrong sow by the ear, when he meddled with me: I'll lead him such a law dance, major, as he never was led in his life; and make him pay the piper into the bargain.—Come, counsellor, we shall be quite snug here—Major, you are sure it was at this house the villain appointed us to meet him?

Old. Yes, yes, madam, I am very sure; and have left orders below accordingly.

Mrs. Black. Well, I suppose he'll be for coming to a compromise; but there is no harm in being prepared—Mr. Quillet, let us sit down.

Counsel. Just as you please, madam; sit or let it alone, 't is the same thing to me.

Mrs. Black. I say, counsellor, in part I have already told you what I would have done—With regard to this testament, there are three things to be considered——

Counsel. Ay, madam, we'll consider them.

Mrs. Black. Well, but hear me out; don't snap one up so—I say there are three things to be considered—First, to prove whether the testator was *compos mentis*—Secondly, whether he was *inops concilii*—And, Thirdly, whether there was a sufficient *probat*——

Counsel. Nay, nay, but, madam, this is all unnecessary.

Mrs. Black. Unnecessary! What do you mean?—Was it not so ruled—Catling, 15th Edward the first, folio B? Was it not afterwards confirmed in the Exchequer chamber, upon error, from *banco regis*?—Look at your reports, sir; Crook James, 114.

Counsel. Lackaday, Mrs. Blackacre, you are really talking in the clouds—have got quite out of your sphere!—I tell you, there was no devise till the 27th Henry VIII.

Mrs. Black. I say there was, sir.

Counsel. You mean, Mrs. Blackacre, there was devise in common-law, but not in *secundum statutum*; so that your quotation is quite foreign to the purpose: in fine, the whole is nonsense, and I see you know nothing of the law.

Mrs. Black. No, sir! But I'll shew you that I do know something of the law; and I'll lay you five hundred pounds to your nosegay, that I know more of the law than you do; and you shall be instructed!

Counsel. Not by you, madam; not by you! Send your solicitor to me; there's your paper of memorandums.

Mrs. Black. Impertinent! My paper of memorandums! Odds my life! Return me my fee too then; my five guineas that I gave you!

Counsel. Don't put yourself in a passion, Mrs. Black-

acre; I am always calm. As to your fee, I shall not return it; for if it was double the sum, I have had trouble enough for it.

Mrs. Black. Trouble! Major, did you ever see such usage as this?

Counsel. To be short with you, madam, you are a person, whose affairs I do not choose to meddle with; for your causes are such as have been set on the left side of the book any time these six years; and since your evidence at the last Hilary sittings was pilloried, my lord chief justice talks of making an order, that you shall not teaze his court any more.

Mrs. Black. Make an order! Make an order against me, that I should not teaze! No, no, they know which side their bread is buttered on better than that. Ecod, if it was not for me, many a one that's saucy enough in the courts would make but a scurvy figure out of them.

Counsel. Come, come, madam, that affair of the evidence was very black.

Mrs. Black. 'Tis false, sir! 'Twas all a prejudice, because he was an Irishman: but, if there was any roguery in it, did not you draw his instructions?

Counsel. You deluded, you deceived me—But guard your expressions, Mrs. Blackacre, guard your expressions; have a care of an action of scandal.

Mrs. Black. Odd's my life, is this language to me, you puny upstart of the law! You green bag carrier! You murderer of unfortunate causes! The clerk's ink is scarce off your fingers! What a shame it is that women should not plead their causes themselves, and not be obliged to employ such ignorant mongrels!

Counsel. Well, madam, very well! Take notice, you are in the hands of the law—I call you to witness, sir, that this

woman has attacked my reputation—Depend upon it, the bench shall hear of you, and my lord chief justice determine which is the best lawyer, you or I. [Exit.

Mrs. Black. I have not patience! I'll have him caned! I'll have him caned in the courts, if it costs me ten thousand pounds—an impudent, saucy—make a rule against me! And you, major, sitting there, with your mouth open—are you a man, a soldier! to wear a sword by your side, and see me treated—Oh, I wish I had a sword!

Old. Do n't make yourself uneasy, madam; I warrant we'll be up with him! I'll write an essay against him in the newspapers; I can get any thing put in for five shillings and sixpence.

Mrs. Black. Go, go, you are a silly old ass.

Waiter enters.

Waiter. What's the matter, madam?

Mrs. Black. Nothing, nothing; go down stairs—Make a rule against me! Odd's my life!—I wish they durst!—egad the parliament should hear of it!

FREEMAN, Bailiffs, and JERRY enter.

Jer. O, law! My mother quarrelling with the waiter.—What's the matter here? won't she pay the reckoning?

Fre. Bailiffs, execute your writ; there's your prisoner.

Bail. We arrest you in the king's name, at the suit of Mr. Freeman, guardian to Jeremiah Blackacre, Esq. in an action of ten thousand pounds.

Mrs. Black. How, how! in a choke bail action?

Fre. Yes, yes; you are taken indeed, madam; and we have discovered your equitable design of providing us with a forged will.

Mrs. Black. Undone, undone! no man was ever too hard

for me till now.—Oh, Jerry! child, wilt thou vex the mother that bore thee?

Jer. Ay, for bearing me before wedlock, as you say: but I'll teach you to call a Blackacre a bastard, though you are never so much my mother.

Mrs. Black. Well, I am undone! not one trick left!—Cruel sir, a word with you, I pray.

Fre. In vain, madam; you have no way to release yourself now but by the bonds of matrimony.

Mrs. Black. How, sir, how! Matrimony! that were but to sue out an habeas corpus for a removal from one prison to another.

Fre. Bailiffs, away with her!

Mrs. Black. Oh, stay, sir! Can you be so cruel as to bring me under covert baron again, and put it out of my power to sue in my own name? But I see, sir, your aim in all this; and if you think proper, to make us both easy, I will, out of my jointure, secure you an annuity of three hundred pounds a year, and pay your debts; and that's all you younger brothers desire to marry a widow for, I am sure.

Fre. Now, madam, you are come to the point I wanted to bring you to: but you shall find I will not be behind hand with you in generosity—I believe I need not tell you, widow, that I have suffered some injuries from your family, and there is now an estate in it, which lawfully and honestly belongs to me.

Mrs. Black. Why, sir, I do remember something, and if you will be so good as to let me speak to my attorney—

Fre. As for that, madam there is no occasion—the land in question brings in about four hundred pounds a year; secure me that, and your person and your son you are welcome to dispose of as you please.

Jer. What, I hope, master Guardian, you are not making agreements without me!

Fre. No, no. First, widow, you must say no more that he is a bastard; have a care of that: and then he must have a settled exhibition of one hundred pounds a year, and a nag of assizes, kept by you, but not upon the common.

Mrs. Black. Well, I can grant all this.

Jer. Ay, ay, fair words butter no cabbage: but, Guardian, make her sign—sign and seal; or otherwise, if you knew her as well as I, you would not trust her word for a farthing.

Fre. I warrant you, 'squire.—Come, my lawyer, with writings ready drawn, is within, and in haste.

Mrs. Black. Make a rule against me! a paltry jackanapes!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Olivia's House. OLIVIA seated at a Table with Candles, and a small Cabinet.

Oli. Sure no intrigue was ever attended with so many odd circumstances as this of mine! I always knew Varnish was a silly fellow, but I thought he had too much experience to mistake a man for a woman. I am glad I picked a quarrel with Eliza however, because now people will never believe I was in her power, but take for malice whatever she may say to my disadvantage. But 'tis just the hour I appointed my young sailor—And, as if my husband had not committed blunders enough already, he is again conveniently gone out of town, to give me a better opportunity of entertaining him: but I married him for convenience.—Hold, do n't I hear somebody treading softly along the passage?

FIDELIA enters through the back scene.

Who's there! my dear!

Fide. My life!

Oli. Well, this is kind; now I think you really love me, because you are punctual to your assignation. I was afraid the misadventure when you was here last would have frightened you from coming any more; and then I should have been so unhappy——

Fide. Why, really, madam, I was under some apprehensions.

Oli. Go, you little coward! You a son of Neptune, and talk of fear!—But stay, I'll lock the door, though there be no occasion for it, but to keep out your fears, and those ugly fits you tell me you are subject to.

Man. [*At the door.*] You have impudence enough to give me fits, and make revenge still impotent.

Oli. What do you say?

Fide. Madam!

Oli. I thought I heard you speak—Come—sit down here—What makes you so pensive?

Fide. I am thinking, madam, if your husband should surprise us again!

Oli. There's no danger; he's ten miles out of town by this time: however, don't mention his name, lest it should prove ominous.

Fide. Well, but won't you give me the satisfaction of telling you how I abused him last?

Oli. I have heard enough of it: I hate any discourse when he or Manly must be part of the subject. No, let me rather resume the conversation I began yesterday. Are you willing to go off with me?

Fide. Whither, madam?

Oli. Any where—to Lapland or India—I repeat it once more—I have a sufficient fortune to make us happy.

[*Trampling without.*

Fide. Hist! Don't I hear a noise?

Oli. No, no.

[*Trampling.*

Fide. Pray, madam, listen; I am sure I hear the motion of feet upon the stairs.

Oli. I tell you 't is no such thing.

[*Trampling.*

Fide. Hark! it grows louder.

Oli. Be silent then—There's somebody tampering with the lock of the door.—Step gently this way—[*Varnish speaks within.*] Death and confusion, 't is my husband! I heard him speak to the footboy—he has sent him round to bar the garden gate.

Fide. I thought, madam, your husband was out of town, you said.

Oli. No, no, 't is he. Fool that I was to trust in his pretended ignorance, or think his reconciliation real; he has lain this train purposely for my undoing. He has stopt the only passage we could get out by; and I know his revengeful temper so well, if he finds us here, he'll murder us. Let us escape your way by the balcony: here, take this cabinet, it contains jewels and bank-notes to a considerable value; here, put out the candles, while I go into the next room and pull down the curtains.

[*Exit.*

MANLY enters.

Fide. This cabinet I believe is your's, sir.

Man. It is mine now, indeed; and shall never escape from me again, at least to her.

Fide. Did you ever hear such a wretch, sir?

Man. A wretch! Why, she makes love like a devil in a

play. But she wanted to elope with you, sir; you never told me that!

Fide. Oh, sir, I have not told you half her wickedness; [*Loud noise.*] but they are breaking open the door. What shall I do, sir?

Man. Stay where you are, and fear nothing. Now we shall see who this happy man is she calls husband.

VARNISH enters.

Var. With much labour and forcing I have at last gained admittance: but now, to find out the occasion of all this privacy and barricading—I heard people talking in the next room, I am sure—Hah! what's here?

Man. Sword and dark lantern, villain, are some odds; however, I believe I shall be able to deal with you. Don't be frightened, my little volunteer.

Fide. Only for your life, sir.

Var. Damnation! two at once—but I'll make sure of one of them, at least.

Fide. Murder! Help! Murder!

OLIVIA enters, and then FREEMAN, Lord PLAUSIBLE, and NOVEL.

Oli. What means this uproar? Distraction! My husband has got in! then we shall have murder indeed. Oh, stay; you must not kill one unable to defend himself!—Lights, lights!—

Footboy enters, with lights.

Man. Now, sir, where are you?—Freeman, look to the door. Hold, my dearest, after so much kindness past between us, I cannot part with you yet—Freeman, let nobody out; for, notwithstanding your lights, we are still in the

dark, till this gentleman turns his face. How! Varnish! Are you the happy man! You! You!—Speak, I say—but your guilty silence tells me all. Well, I will not upbraid you; let your own reflections be your punishment—Fare ye well, sir!

Fre. Look yonder, captain, to the volunteer; he is hurt, and I believe fainting.

Fide. No, sir, 't is only my fright, not yet well over: I shall recover here in the next room.

Man. My boy hurt?

Mrs. BLACKACRE and JERRY enter.

Mrs. Black. I dare swear there is something going forward contrary to the statute, and as in that remarkable case, Stokes plaintiff, against Jenkins and other defendants. But I'll take minutes; for perhaps one side or other may choose to bring it into the courts.

Jer. Well, my mother will never let the law alone, I see that; for when she's at a loss for wherewithal to go herself, she's for setting other people at it.

Man. Oh, Heaven!—Freeman, come here!

Fre. How now? What's the matter?

Man. More miracles still—The volunteer's a woman.

All. A woman!

Fide. Dear captain, spare my blushes; yet wherefore should I be ashamed of a virtuous and generous passion? Yes, I am a woman, I own it; and, through love for the worthiest of men, have attempted to follow him in this disguise, partly out of fear to disclose my sentiments, for I knew of his engagements to that lady; and the constancy of his nature, which nothing but herself could have changed.

Man. Dear madam, I desired you to bring me out of confusion, and you have given me more: I know not what to

peak to, or how to look upon you ; the sense of my rough and ill usage gives me more pain now it is over, than you felt when you suffered it :—but, if my affections, once prostituted to such a woman——

Oli. My breast burns with fury, indignation, disdain, and must have vent. Coxcomb, ideot, brute !—But think not long to triumph, for I go to have such vengeance on ye——

L. Plau. Ma'am, will you permit me the honour of your fair hand ?

Oli. Take it.

[*Strikes him and exit.*]

Nov. Ha, ha, ha ! There's for your gentleman-ushership, my lord ! Well, what do you think of her now ? Did not I always tell you she was a jilt ?

L. Plau. Take it from me, Mr. Novel, she's a lady of great virtue and delicacy ; though, indeed, I could not have believed her fingers to have been quite so hard.

Mrs. Black. But, pray, Captain Manly, a word with you. Is not this my cousin Olivia's house and furniture ?—And do you eject her ?—Seize on her goods and chattels *vi et armis* ? Ecod, if I was she, I'd make demand—bring my trover.

Man. Good Mrs. Blackacre, be pacified : if your cousin had her deserts, the law would be her greatest enemy.—And now, madam, let me beg you to accept of this—and with it my heart ; both, I confess, too small a recompence for your merit : for you deserve the Indian world, and I would go thither out of covetousness for your sake.

Fide. Your heart, sir, is a present of that value, I can never make any return for it : but I can give you back such a present as this, which I got by the death of my father, a gentleman of the North, whose only child I was ; [*Gives a paper.*] therefore left me in the present possession of 2000l.

a year. The name of my family is Grey; my other, Fidelity; the rest of my story you shall know when I have fewer auditors.

Man. Nay, madam, you now take from me all power of making you any compliment on my part: I was going to tell you, that on your account only, I would forego the pleasures of a retirement I have long wished for, and be reconciled again to the world, which was grown odious to me: but if I should, I doubt my friend here would say it is your estate made me friends with it.

Fre. I must confess I should; for I think most of our quarrels to the world, are just such as we sometimes have to a handsome woman, only because she won't grant us as many favours as we could wish.

Man. Nay, if you are a Plain Dealer too, give me your hand; and for your two sakes, though I have been so lately deceived in both sexes, I will believe there are still in the world good-natured friends who are not prostitutes, and handsome women worthy to be friends. [Exeunt omnes.]

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THE END.

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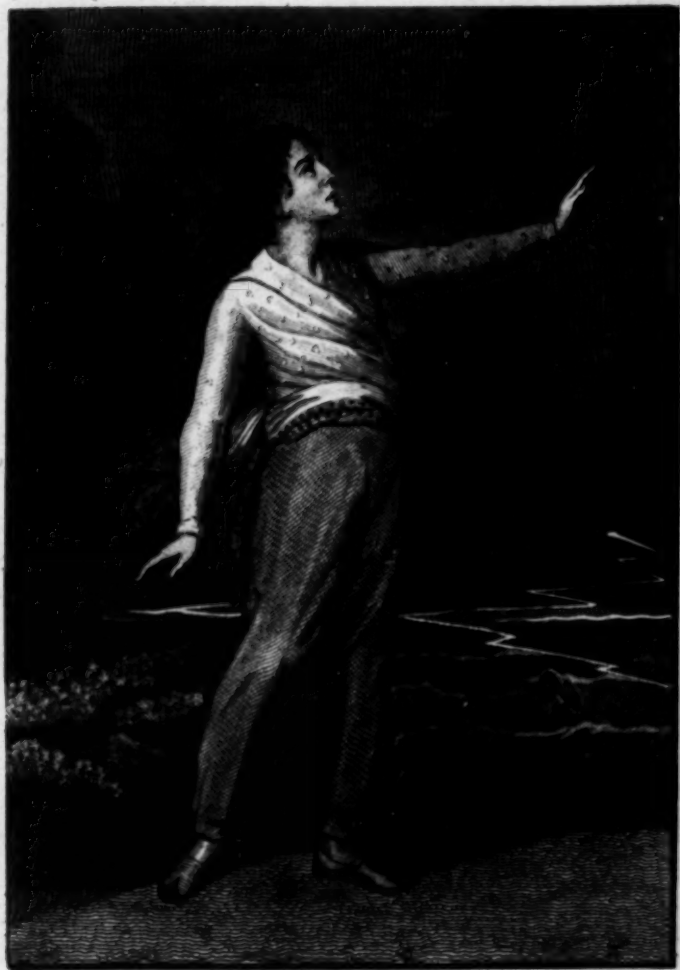
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London Printed for J. Cawthorn, British Library Strand Sept 3 1796



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THE
FATAL CURIOSITY.

A
TRAGEDY.

BY MR. GEORGE LILLO.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT
THE THEATRE-ROYAL, HAY-MARKET.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,
By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those
printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON:

Printed for, and under the Direction of,
GEORGE CAWTHORN, British Library, STRAND.

M DCC XCVI.



GEORGE LILLO.

THIS Gentleman was by profession a jeweller, and was born in the neighbourhood of Moorgate in London, on the 4th of Feb. 1693, in which neighbourhood he pursued his occupation for many years with the fairest and most unblemished character. He was bred up in the principles of the Protestant Dissenters; but let his religious tenets have been what they would, he would have been an honour to any sect he had adhered to. He was strongly attached to the Muses, yet seemed to have laid it down as a maxim, that the devotion paid to them ought always to tend to the promotion of virtue, morality, and religion. In pursuance of this aim, Mr. Lillo was happy in the choice of his subjects, and shewed great power of affecting the heart, by working up the passions to such a height, as to render the distresses of common and domestic life, as equally interesting to the audiences as that of kings and heroes, and the ruin brought on private families by an indulgence of avarice, lust, &c. as the havock made in states and empires by ambition, cruelty, or tyranny.

His *George Barnwell*, *Fatal Curiosity*, and *Arden of Feversham*, are all planned on common and well-known stories; yet they have perhaps more frequently drawn tears from an audience, than the more pompous tragedies of *Alexander the Great*, *All for Love*, &c, particularly the first of them, which, being founded on a well-known old ballad, many of the critics of that time, who went to the first representation of it, formed so contemptible an idea of the piece in their expectations, that they purchased the ballad, some thousands of which were used in one day on this account, in order to draw comparisons between that and the play. But the merit of the play soon got the better of this contempt, and presented them with scenes written so truly to the heart, that they were compelled to sub-

scribe to their power, and drop their ballads to take up their handkerchiefs.

Mr. Lillo, as I before observed, has been happy in the choice of his subjects; his conduct in the management of them is no less meritorious, and his *Pathos* very great. If there is any fault to be objected to his writings, it is that sometimes he affects an elevation of style somewhat above the simplicity of his subject, and the supposed rank of his characters; but the custom of tragedy will stand in some degree of excuse for this, and a still better argument perhaps may be admitted in vindication, not only of our present author, but of other writers in the like predicament, which is, that even nature itself will justify this conduct, since we find even the most humble characters in real life, when under peculiar circumstances of distress, or actuated by the influence of any violent passions, will, at times, be elevated to an aptness of expression and power of language, not only greatly superior to themselves, but even to the general language of conversation of persons of much higher rank in life, and of minds more perfectly cultivated.

In the Prologue to *Elmerick*, which was not acted until after the author's death, it is said, that when he wrote that play he was *depressed by want*, and afflicted by disease; but in the former particular there appears to be evidently a mistake, as he died possessed of an estate of *60l. per annum*, besides other effects to a considerable value. The late editor of his works (Mr. Davies), in two volumes, 12mo, 1775, relates the following story of his author, which, however, we cannot think adapted to convey any favourable impression of the person of whom it is told: 'Towards the latter part of his life, Mr. Lillo, whether from judgement or humour, determined to put the sincerity of his friends, who professed a very high regard for him, to a trial. In order to carry on this design, he put in practice an odd kind of stratagem: he asked one of his intimate acquaintance to lend him a considerable sum of money, and for this he declared he would give him no

‘bond, nor any other security, except a note of hand; the
‘person to whom he applied, not liking the terms, civilly re-
‘fused him.

‘Soon after, Lillo met his nephew, Mr. Underwood, with
‘whom he had been at variance for some time. He put the
‘same question to him, desiring him to lend him money upon
‘the same terms. His nephew, either from a sagacious appre-
‘hension of his uncle’s real intention, or from generosity of
‘spirit, immediately offered to comply with his request. Lillo
‘was so well pleased with this ready compliance of Mr. Un-
‘derwood, that he immediately declared, that he was fully sa-
‘tisfied with the love and regard that his nephew bore him;
‘he was convinced that his friendship was entirely disinte-
‘rested, and assured him that he should reap the benefit such
‘generous behaviour deserved. In consequence of this pro-
‘mise, he bequeathed him the bulk of his fortune.’

The same writer says, that Lillo in his person was lusty, but not tall, and of a pleasing aspect, though unhappily deprived of the sight of one eye.

Our author died Sept. 3, 1739, in the 47th year of his age; and a few months after his death, Henry Fielding printed the following character of him in *The Champion*: ‘He had a perfect knowledge of human nature, though his contempt of all
‘base means of application, which are the necessary steps to
‘great acquaintance, restrained his conversation within very
‘narrow bounds. He had the spirit of an old Roman, joined
‘to the innocence of a primitive Christian; he was content with
‘his little state of life, in which his excellent temper of mind
‘gave him an happiness beyond the power of riches, and it
‘was necessary for his friends to have a sharp insight into his
‘want of their services, as well as good inclination or abilities
‘to serve him. In short, he was one of the best of men, and
‘those who knew him best will most regret his loss.’

Whincop (or the compiler of the list of plays affixed to his *Scanderbeg*) has indeed spoke but slightly of his genius,

on account of some little sort of rivalry and pique subsisting between that gentleman and our author with respect to a tragedy of the latter's, entitled, *The Christian Hero*, written on the same story with the *Scanderbeg* of the former. Notwithstanding which, under the sanction not only of the success of his pieces, but also of the commendations bestowed on them by Mr. Pope, and other indisputable judges, I shall venture to affirm, that Mr. Lillo is far from standing in the lowest rank of merit (however he may be ranged with respect to fame) among our dramatic writers.

His dramatic pieces are seven in number, and their titles as follow:

Sylvia; or, the Country Burial. O. 8vo. 1730.

The London Merchant; or, the History of George Barnwell. T. 8vo. 1731.

The Christian Hero. T. 8vo. N. D. [1734.]

The Fatal Curiosity. T. 8vo. 1737.

Marina, a Play, 8vo. 1738.

Britannia and Batavia. M. 8vo. 1740.

Elmerick; or, *Justice Triumphant*. T. 8vo. 1740.

Arden of Feversham. F. 12mo. 1762.

In the proposals for publishing Lillo's works some years ago, besides the above, was contained one piece called,
'The Regulators.'

THE
FATAL CURIOSITY.

THIS piece consists of but three acts. The story of it, however, is very simple and affecting, and is said to have been founded on a real fact which happened on the western coast of England. The circumstance of a son long absent from his parents, keeping himself, on his return to visit them, for some time unknown, is natural and unforced, while at the same time their being induced by the depth of their distress and penury, to resolve on and perpetrate his murder, for the sake of the treasures he had shewn them he was possessed of, is productive of some very fine scenes of intermingled horror and tenderness, when they come to be informed of the dreadful deed they have committed. In short, the play is in our opinion equal, if not superior, to any of this author's other works, and, when acted where it made its first appearance, met with a very favourable reception.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY HENRY FIELDING, ESQ.

SPOKEN BY MR. ROBERTS.

*THE tragic muse has long forgot to please
With Shakspeare's nature, or with Fletcher's ease:
No passion mov'd thro' five long acts you sit,
Charm'd with the poet's language, or his wit.
Fine things are said, no matter whence they fall;
Each single character might speak them all.*

*But from this modern fashionable way,
To-night our Author begs your leave to stray.
No fustian hero rages here to-night;
No armies fall to fix a tyrant's right:
From lower life we draw our scene's distress:
———Let not your equals move your pity less!
Virtue distress in humble state support;
Nor think she never lives without the court.*

*Tho' to our scenes no royal robes belong,
And tho' our little stage as yet be young,
Throw both your scorn and prejudice aside,
Let us with favour, not contempt be try'd;
Thro' the first acts a kind attention lend,
The growing scene shall force you to attend;
Shall catch the eyes of every tender fair,
And make them charm their lovers with a tear.
The lover too by pity shall impart
His tender passion to his fair one's heart:
The breast which others anguish cannot move,
Was ne'er the seat of friendship, or of love.*

Dramatis Personae.

HAY-MARKET.

Men.

Old WILMOT,	-	-	-	Mr. Roberts.
Young WILMOT,	-	-	-	Mr. Davis.
EUSTACE,	-	-	-	Mr. Wooburn.
RANDAL,	-	-	-	Mr. Blakes.

Women.

AGNES, Wife to Old Wilmot,	-			Mrs. Clarke.
CHARLOT,	-	-	-	Miss Jones.
MARIA,	-	-	-	Miss Karver.

Visitors, Men and Women.

SCENE, Penryn in Cornwall.



FATAL CURIOSITY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Room in WILMOT's House. Old WILMOT solus.

Old WILMOT.

THE day is far advanc'd ; the chearful sun
Pursues with vigour his repeated course ;
No labours less'ning, nor no time decaying
His strength, or splendor : Evermore the same,
From age to age his influence sustains
Dependent worlds, bestows both life and motion
On the dull mass that forms their dusky orbs,
Cheers them with heat, and gilds them with his brightness.
Yet man, of jarring elements compos'd,
Who posts from change to change, from the first hour
Of his frail being till his dissolution,
Enjoys the sad prerogative above him,
To think, and to be wretched——What is life,
To him that's born to die ! or what that wisdom
Whose perfection ends, in knowing we know nothing !
Mere contradiction all ! A tragic farce,
'Tedious tho' short, and without art elab'rate,
Ridiculously sad——

RANDAL enters.

Where hast been, Randall?

Rand. Not out of Penryn, sir; but to the strand,
To hear what news from Falmouth since the storm
Of wind last night.

O. Wil. It was a dreadful one.

Rand. Some found it so. A noble ship from India
Ent'ring in the harbour, run upon a rock,
And there was lost.

O. Wil. What came of those on board her?

Rand. Some few are sav'd; but much the greater part,
'Tis thought, are perished.

O. Wil. They are past the fear
Of future tempests, or a wreck on shore;
'Those who escap'd, are still expos'd to both.

Rand. But I've heard news, much stranger than this ship-
wreck

Here in Cornwall. The brave Sir Walter Raleigh,
Being arrived at Plymouth, from Guiana,
A most unhappy voyage, has been betray'd
By base Sir Lewis Stukeley, his own kinsman,
And seiz'd on by an order from the court;
And 'tis reported, he must lose his head,
To satisfy the Spaniards.

O. Wil. Not unlikely;
His martial genius does not suit the times.
There's now no insolence that Spain can offer,
But to the shame of this pacific reign,
Poor England must submit to——Gallant man!
Posterity perhaps may do thee justice,
And praise thy courage, learning, and integrity,
When thou'rt past hearing: Thy successful enemies,

Much sooner paid, have their reward in hand,
And know for what they labour'd.—Such events
Must, questionless, excite all thinking men,
To love and practise virtue!

Rand. Nay; 'tis certain,
That virtue ne'er appears so like itself,
So truly bright and great, as when oppress'd.

O. Wil. I understand no riddles.—Where's your mistress?

Rand. I saw her pass the High-street t'wards the minster.

O. Wil. She's gone to visit Charlot—She doth well.

In the soft bosom of that gentle maid,
There dwells more goodness, than the rigid race
Of moral pedants, e'er believ'd, or taught.
With what amazing constancy and truth,
Doth she sustain the absence of our son,
Whom more than life she loves! How shun for him,
Whom we shall ne'er see more, the rich and great;
Who own her charms more than supply the want
Of shining heaps, and sigh to make her happy.
Since our misfortunes, we have found no friend,
None who regarded our distress, but her;
And she, by what I have observ'd of late,
Is tired, or exhausted—curst condition!
To live a burden to one only friend,
And blast her youth with our contagious woe!
Who that had reason, soul, or sense would bear it
A moment longer!—Then this honest wretch!—
I must dismiss him—Why should I detain
A grateful, gen'rous youth to perish with me?
His service may procure him bread elsewhere,
Tho' I have none to give him.—Pr'ythee, Randal!
How long hast thou been with me?

Rand. Fifteen years.—

I was a very child when first you took me,
To wait upon your son, my dear young master!
I oft have wish'd, I'd gone to India with him;
Tho' you, desponding, give him o'er for lost.

[*Old Wilmot wipes his eyes.*]

I am to blame——This talk revives your sorrow
For his absence.

O. Wil. How can that be reviv'd,
Which never died?

Rand. The whole of my intent
Was to confess your bounty, that supplied
The loss of both my parents: I was long
The object of your charitable care.

O. Wil. No more of that: Thou'st served me longer
since

Without reward; so that account is balanced,
Or rather I'm thy debtor——I remember,
When poverty began to show her face
Within these walls, and all my other servants,
Like pamper'd vermin from a falling house,
Retreated with the plunder they had gain'd,
And left me, too indulgent and remiss
For such ungraceful wretches, to be crush'd
Beneath the ruin they had help'd to make,
That you, more good than wise, refused to leave me.

Rand. Nay, I beseech you, Sir!——

O. Wil. With my distress,
In perfect contradiction to the world,
Thy love, respect, and diligence increased;
Now all the recompence within my power,
Is to discharge thee, Randal, from my hard,
Unprofitable service.

Rand. Heaven forbid !

Shall I forsake you in your worst necessity ?——
Believe me, sir ! my honest soul abhors
The barb'rous thought.

O. Wil. What ! canst thou feed on air ?
I have not left wherewith to purchase food
For one meal more.

Rand. Rather than leave you thus,
I'll beg my bread, and live on others bounty
While I serve you.

O. Wil. Down, down my swelling heart,
Or burst in silence : 'Tis thy cruel fate
Insults thee by his kindness—He is innocent
Of all the pain it gives thee——Go thy ways——
I will no more suppress thy youthful hopes
Of rising in the world.

Rand. 'Tis true ; I'm young,
And never tried my fortune, or my genius ;
Which may perhaps find out some happy means,
As yet unthought of, to supply your wants.

O. Wil. Thou tortur'st me—I hate all obligations
Which I can ne'er return——And who art thou,
That I shou'd stoop to take 'em from thy hand !
Care for thyself, but take no thought for me ;
I will not want thee——trouble me no more.

Rand. Be not offended, sir, and I will go.
I ne'er repin'd at your commands before ;
But heaven's my witness ! I obey you now
With strong reluctance, and a heavy heart.
Farewell, my worthy master !

[*Going.*

O. Wil. Farewell——Stay——
As thou art yet a stranger to the world,
Of which, alas ! I've had too much experience,

I should, methinks, before we part, bestow
A little counsel on thee—Dry thy eyes—
If thou weep'st thus, I shall proceed no farther.
Dost thou aspire to greatness, or to wealth,
Quit books and the unprofitable search
Of wisdom there, and study human kind:
No science will avail thee without that;
But that obtain'd, thou need'st not any other.
This will instruct thee to conceal thy views,
And wear the face of probity and honour,
'Till thou hast gain'd thy end; which must be ever
Thy own advantage, at that man's expence
Who shall be weak enough to think thee honest.

Rand. You mock me, sure.

O. Wil. I never was more serious.

Rand. Why should you counsel what you scorn'd to
practise?

O. Wil. Because that foolish scorn has been my ruin.
I've been an idiot, but would have thee wiser,
And treat mankind, as they would treat thee, Randal;
As they deserve, and I've been treated by 'em.
Thou'st seen by me, and those who now despise me,
How men of fortune fall, and beggars rise;
Shun my example; treasure up my precepts;
The world's before thee—be a knave, and prosper.
What art thou dumb? [After a long pause.]

Rand. Amazement ties my tongue.
Where are your former principles?

O. Wil. No matter;
Suppose I have renounced 'em: I have passions,
And love thee still; therefore would have thee think
The world is all a scene of deep deceit,
And he who deals with mankind on the square,
Is his own bubble, and undoes himself.

[Exit.]

Rand. Is this the man, I thought so wise and just?
 What teach, and counsel me to be a villain!
 Sure grief has made him frantic, or some fiend
 Assum'd his shape—I shall suspect my senses.
 High-minded he was ever, and improvident;
 But pitiful and generous to a fault:
 Pleasure he loved, but honour was his idol.
 O fatal change! O horrid transformation!
 So a majestic temple sunk to ruin,
 Becomes the loathsome shelter and abode
 Of lurking serpents, toads, and beasts of prey;
 And scaly dragons hiss, and lions roar,
 Where wisdom taught, and music charm'd before.

SCENE II.

A Parlour in CHARLOT'S House. CHARLOT and MARIA enter.

Char. What terror and amazement must they feel
 Who die by ship-wreck!

Mar. 'Tis a dreadful thought!

Char. Ay; is it not, Maria! to descend,
 Living and conscious, to that watry tomb?
 Alas! had we no sorrows of our own,
 The frequent instances of others woe,
 Must give a gen'rous mind a world of pain.
 But you forget you promised me to sing:
 Tho' cheerfulness and I have long been strangers,
 Harmonious sounds are still delightful to me.
 There is in melody a secret charm
 That flatters, while it adds to my disquiet,
 And makes the deepest sadness the most pleasing.

There's sure no passion in the human soul,
 But finds its food in music—I would hear
 The song compos'd by that unhappy maid,
 Whose faithful lover 'scap'd a thousand perils
 From rocks, and sands, and the devouring deep;
 And after all, being arrived at home,
 Passing a narrow brook, was drowned there,
 And perished in her sight.

Mar. *Cease, cease, heart-sasing tears ;
 Adieu, you flatt'ring fears,
 Which seven long tedious years
 Taught me to bear.*

*Tears are for lighter woes ;
 Fear no such danger knows,
 As fate, remorseless shows,
 Endless despair.*

*Dear cause of all my pain,
 On the wide stormy main,
 Thou wast preserv'd in vain,
 Tho' still ador'd ;*

*Hadst thou died there unseen,
 My blasted eyes had been
 Saw'd from the horrid'st scene
 Maid e'er deplor'd.*

[Charlot finds a letter.

Char. What's this ?—A letter superscribed to me !
 None could convey it here but you, Maria.
 Ungen'rous, cruel maid ! to use me thus !
 To join with flatt'ring men to break my peace,
 And persecute me to the last retreat !

Mar. Why should it break your peace, to hear the sighs

Of honourable love, and know th' effects
Of your resistless charms? This letter is——

Char. No matter whence—return it back unopen'd:
I have no love, no charms but for my Wilmot,
Nor would have any.

Mar. Strange infatuation!
Why should you waste the flower of your days
In fruitless expectation——Wilmot's dead;
Or living, dead to you.

Char. I'll not despair;
Patience shall cherish hope, nor wrong his honour
By unjust suspicion. I know his truth,
And will preserve my own. But to prevent
All future, vain, officious importunity,
Know, thou incessant foe of my repose,
Whether he sleeps secure from mortal cares,
In the deep bosom of the boist'rous main,
Or tost with tempests, still endures its rage;
Whether his weary pilgrimage by land
Has found an end, and he now rests in peace
In earth's cold womb, or wanders o'er her face;
Be it my lot to waste, in pining grief,
The remnant of my days for his known loss,
Or live, as now, uncertain and in doubt,
No second choice shall violate my vows;
High heaven, which heard them, and abhors the perjured,
Can witness, they were made without reserve;
Never to be retracted, ne'er dissolved
By accidents or absence, time or death.

Mar. I know, and long have known, my honest zeal
To serve you gives offence——But be offended——
This is no time for flatt'ry——Did your vows
Oblige you to support his gloomy, proud,

Impatient parents, to your utter ruin—
You well may weep to think on what you've done.

Char. I weep to think that I can do no more
For their support—What will become of 'em!—
The hoary, helpless, miserable pair!

Mar. Then all these tears, this sorrow is for them.

Char. Taught by afflictions, I have learn'd to bear
Much greater ills than poverty with patience.
When luxury and ostentation's banish'd,
The calls of nature are but few; and those
These hands, not us'd to labour, may supply.
But when I think on what my friends must suffer,
My spirits fail, and I'm o'erwhelm'd with grief.

Mar. What I would blame, you force me to admire,
And mourn for you, as you lament for them.
Your patience, constancy, and resignation
Merit a better fate.

Char. So pride would tell me,
And vain self-love, but I believe them not:
And if by wanting pleasure I have gain'd
Humility, I'm richer for my loss.

Mar. You have the heav'nly art, still to improve
Your mind by all events—But here comes one,
Whose pride seems to increase with her misfortunes.

AGNES enters.

Her faded dress unfashionably fine,
As ill conceals her poverty, as that
Strain'd complaisance her haughty, swelling heart.
Tho' perishing with want, so far from asking,
She ne'er receives a favour uncompelled,
And while she ruins, scorns to be oblig'd:
She wants me gone, and I abhor her sight. [Exit Mar.

Char. This visit's kind.

Agn. Few else would think it so :

Those who would once have thought themselves much honour'd

By the least favour, tho' 'twere but a look
I could have shewn them, now refuse to see me.

'Tis misery enough to be reduced
To the low level of the common herd,
Who, born to begg'ry, envy all above them;
But 'tis the curse of curses, to endure
The insolent contempt of those we scorn.

Char. By scorning, we provoke them to contempt;
And thus offend, and suffer in our turns :
We must have patience.

Agn. No, I scorn them yet ;
But there's no end of suff'ring : Who can say
Their sorrows are compleat? My wretched husband,
Tired with our woes, and hopeless of relief,
Grows sick of life.

Char. May gracious heaven support him !

Agn. And, urg'd by indignation and despair,
Would plunge into eternity at once,
By foul self-murder : His fixed love for me,
Whom he would fain persuade to share his fate,
And take the same, uncertain, dreadful course,
Alone withholds his hand.

Char. And may it ever !

Agn. I've known with him the two extremes of life,
The highest happiness, and deepest woe,
With all the sharp and bitter aggravations
Of such a vast transition—Such a fall
In the decline of life !—I have as quick,
As exquisite a sense of pain as he,

And would do any thing, but die, to end it ;
But there my courage fails—Death is the worst
That fate can bring, and cuts off ev'ry hope.

Char. We must not chuse, but strive to bear our lot
Without reproach, or guilt : But by one act
Of desperation, we may overthrow
The merit we've been raising all our days ;
And lose our whole reward—And now, methinks,
Now more than ever, we have cause to fear,
And be upon our guard. The hand of heaven
Spreads clouds on clouds o'er our benighted heads,
And, wrapt in darkness, doubles our distress.
I had, the night last past, repeated twice,
A strange and awful dream : I would not yield
To fearful superstition, nor despise
The admonition of a friendly power
That wish'd my good.—

Agn. I've certain plagues enough,
Without the help of dreams, to make me wretched,

Char. I would not stake my happiness or duty
On their uncertain credit, nor on aught
But reason, and the known decrees of Heaven.
Yet dreams have sometimes shewn events to come,
And may excite to vigilance and care,
In some important hour ; when all our weakness
Shall be attacked, and all our strength be needful,
To shun the gulph that gapes for our destruction,
And fly from guilt and everlasting ruin.
My vision may be such, and sent to warn us,
Now we are tried by multiplied afflictions,
To mark each motion of our swelling hearts,
And not attempt to extricate ourselves,
And seek deliverance by forbidden ways ;

But keep our hopes and innocence entire,
 'Till we're dismiss'd to join the happy dead
 In that bless'd world, where transitory pain
 And frail imperfect virtue, is rewarded
 With endless pleasure and consummate joy ;
 Or heaven relieves us here.

Agn. Well, pray proceed ;
 You've rais'd my curiosity at least.

Char. Methought I sat, in a dark winter's night,
 My garments thin, my head and bosom bare,
 On the wide summit of a barren mountain ;
 Defenceless and exposed, in that high region,
 To all the cruel rigors of the season.
 The sharp bleak winds pierc'd thro' my shiv'ring frame,
 And storms of hail, and sleet, and driving rains
 Beat with impetuous fury on my head,
 Drench'd my chill'd limbs, and pour'd a deluge round me.
 On one hand ever gentle patience sat,
 On whose calm bosom I reclin'd my head ;
 And on the other, silent contemplation.
 At length, to my unclosed and watchful eyes,
 That long had roll'd in darkness, and oft rais'd
 Their chearless orbs towards the starless sky,
 And sought for light in vain, the dawn appear'd ;
 And I beheld a man, an utter stranger,
 But of a graceful and exalted mien,
 Who press'd with eager transport to embrace me.
 I shunn'd his arms—But at some words he spoke,
 Which I have now forgot, I turn'd again,
 But he was gone—And oh ! transporting sight !
 Your son, my dearest Wilmot ! fill'd his place.—

Agn. If I regarded dreams, I should expect
 Some fair event from yours : I have heard nothing
 That should alarm you yet.

Char. But what's to come,
 Tho' more obscure, is terrible indeed.
 Methought we parted soon, and when I sought him,
 You and his father—Yes, you both were there——
 Strove to conceal him from me: I pursued
 You with my cries, and call'd on heaven and earth
 To judge my wrongs, and force you to reveal
 Where you had hid my love, my life, my Wilmot!——

Agn. Unless you mean t'affront me; spare the rest.
 'Tis just as likely Wilmot should return,
 As we become your foes.

Char. Far be such rudeness
 From Charlot's thoughts; But when I heard you name
 Self-murder, it reviv'd the frightful image of such a dread-
 ful scene.

Agn. You will persist!——

Char. Excuse me; I have done. Being a dream,
 I thought, indeed, it could not give offence.

Agn. Not when the matter of it is offensive!——
 You could not think so, had you thought at all;
 But I take nothing ill from thee——Adieu;
 I've tarried longer than I first intended,
 And my poor husband mourns the while alone. [Exit.

Char. She's gone abruptly, and, I fear, displeas'd.
 The least appearance of advice or caution,
 Sets her impatient temper in a flame.
 When grief, that well might humble, swells our pride,
 And pride increasing, aggravates our grief,
 The tempest must prevail till we are lost.

*When Heaven, incens'd, proclaims unequal war
 With guilty earth, and sends its shafts from far,
 No bolt descends to strike, no flame to burn
 The humble shrubs that in low valleys mourn;*

*While mountain pines, whose lofty heads aspire
To fan the storm, and wave in fields of fire,
And stubborn oaks that yield not to its force,
Are burnt, o'erthrown, or shiver'd in its course.*

SCENE III.

Young WILMOT and EUSTACE enter in Indian habits.

Y. Wil. Welcome, my friend! to Penryn: here we're safe.

Eust. Then we're deliver'd twice; first from the sea,
And then from savage men, who, more remorseless,
Prey on shipwreck'd wretches, and spoil and murder those
Whom fatal tempests and devouring waves,
In all their fury, spar'd.

Y. Wil. It is a scandal,
Tho' malice must acquit the better sort,
The rude unpolish'd people here in Cornwall
Have long laid under, and with too much justice:
Could our superiors find some happy means
To mend it, they would gain immortal honour.
For 'tis an evil grown almost inv'erate,
And asks a bold and skilful hand to cure.

Eust. Your treasure's safe, I hope.

Y. Wil. 'Tis here, thank Heaven!
Being in jewels, when I saw our danger,
I hid it in my bosom.

Eust. I observed you,
And wonder how you could command your thoughts,
In such a time of terror and confusion.

Y. Wil. My thoughts were then at home—O England!
land! England!

Thou seat of plenty, liberty, and health,
With transport I behold thy verdant fields,
Thy lofty mountains rich with useful ore,
Thy numerous herds, thy flocks, and winding streams:
After a long and tedious absence, Eustace!
With what delight we breathe our native air,
And tread the genial soil that bore us first.
'Tis said the world is ev'ry wise man's country;
Yet, after having view'd its various nations,
I'm weak enough still to prefer my own,
To all I've seen beside—You smile, my friend!
And think, perhaps, 'tis instinct more than reason:
Why, be it so. Instinct preceded reason
In the wisest of us all, and may sometimes
Be much the better guide. But be it either;
I must confess, that even death itself
Appear'd to me with twice its native horrors,
When apprehended in a foreign land.
Death is, no doubt, in ev'ry place the same;
Yet observation must convince us, most men,
Who have it in their power, chuse to expire
Where they first drew their breath.

Eust. Believe me, Wilmot!

Your grave reflections were not what I smil'd at;
I own their truth. That we're return'd to England,
Affords me all the pleasure you can feel,
Merely on that account: yet I must think
A warmer passion gives you all this transport.
You have not wander'd, anxious and impatient,
From clime to clime, and compass'd sea and land
To purchase wealth, only to spend your days

In idle pomp, and luxury at home :
 I know thee better : thou art brave and wise,
 And must have nobler aims.

Y. Wil. O, Eustace! Eustace!

Thou know'st, for I've confest to thee, I love ;
 But having never seen the charming maid,
 Thou canst not know the fierceness of my flame.
 My hopes and fears, like the tempestuous seas
 That we have past, now mount me to the skies,
 Now hurl me down from that stupendous height,
 And drive me to the centre. Did you know
 How much depends on this important hour,
 You would not be surprized to see me thus.
 The sinking fortune of our ancient house,
 Which time and various accidents had wasted,
 Compell'd me young to leave my native country,
 My weeping parents, and my lovely Charlot ;
 Who ruled, and must for ever rule my fate,
 How I've improved, by care and honest commerce,
 My little stock, you are in part a witness.
 'Tis now seven tedious years since I set forth ;
 And as th' uncertain course of my affairs
 Bore me from place to place, I quickly lost
 The means of corresponding with my friends.
 —O ! should my Charlot ! doubtful of my truth,
 Or in despair ever to see me more,
 Have given herself to some more happy lover !
 Distraction's in the thought !—Or should my parents,
 Griev'd for my absence, and oppress'd with want,
 Have sunk beneath their burden, and expired,
 While I, too late, was flying to relieve them ;
 The end of all my long and weary travels,
 The hope that made success itself a blessing,

Being defeated and for ever lost ;
What were the riches of the world to me ?

Eust. The wretch who fears all that is possible,
Must suffer more than he who feels the worst
A man can feel, who lives exempt from fear.
A woman may be false, and friends are mortal ;
And yet your aged parents may be living,
And your fair mistress constant.

Y. Wil. True, they may ;
I doubt, but I despair not—No, my friend !
My hopes are strong and lively as my fears,
And give me such a prospect of my happiness,
As nothing but fruition can exceed :
They tell me, Charlot is as true as fair,
As good as wise, as passionate as chaste ;
That she with fierce impatience, like my own,
Laments our long and painful separation ;
That we shall meet, never to part again ;
That I shall see my parents, kiss the tears
From their pale hollow cheeks, cheer their sad hearts,
And drive that gaping phantom, meagre want,
For ever from their board ; crown all their days
To come with peace, with pleasure, and abundance ;
Receive their fond embraces and their blessings,
And be a blessing to 'em.

Eust. 'Tis our weakness :——
Blind to events, we reason in the dark,
And fondly apprehend what none e'er found,
Or ever shall, pleasure and pain unmix'd ;
And flatter, and torment ourselves by turns,
With what shall never be.

Y. Wil. I'll go this instant
To seek my Charlot, and explore my fate.

Eust. What, in that foreign habit!

Y. Wil. That's a trifle,
Not worth my thoughts.

Eust. The hardships you've endur'd,
And your long stay beneath the burning zone,
Where one eternal sultry summer reigns,
Have marr'd the native hue of your complexion :
Methinks you look more like a sun-burnt Indian,
Than a Briton.

Y. Wil. Well, 'tis no matter, Eustace!
I hope my mind's not alter'd for the worse ;
And for my outside—But inform me, friend!
When I may hope to see you.

Eust. When you please :
You'll find me at the inn.

Y. Wil. When I have learnt my doom, expect me
there.

'Till then, farewell!

Eust. Farewell! success attend you! [Exit.

Y. Wil. 'We flatter, and torment ourselves, by turns,
' With what shall never be.' Amazing folly!
We stand exposed to many unavoidable
Calamities, and therefore fondly labour
T' increase their number, and enforce their weight,
By our fantastic hopes and groundless fears.

*For one severe distress impos'd by fate,
What numbers doth tormenting fear create?
Deceiv'd by hope, Ixion like we prove
Immortal joys, and seem to rival Jove ;
The cloud dissolv'd, impatient we complain,
And pay for fancied bliss substantial pain.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

Charlot's House. CHARLOT enters thoughtful; and soon after
MARIA from the other side.

Maria.

MADAM, a stranger in a foreign habit
Desires to see you.

Char. In a foreign habit——

'Tis strange, and unexpected—But admit him. [*Exit Maria.*
Who can this stranger be? I know no foreigner.

Young WILMOT enters.

——Nor any man like this.

Y. Wil. Ten thousand joys!——

[*Going to embrace her.*

Char. You are rude, sir—Pray forbear, and let me know
What business brought you here; or leave the place.

Y. Wil. She knows me not, or will not seem to know me.

[*Aside.*

Perfidious maid! Am I forgot or scorned?

Char. Strange questions from a man I never knew?

Y. Wil. With what aversion and contempt she views me!

My fears are true; some other has her heart:

—She's lost—my fatal absence has undone me. [*Aside.*

—O! could thy Wilmot have forgot thee, Charlot!

Char. Ha! Wilmot! say! what do your words import?
O gentle stranger! ease my swelling heart,
That else will burst! Canst thou inform me ought?
What dost thou know of Wilmot?

R. Wil. This I know :

When all the winds of heaven seem'd to conspire
Against the stormy main, and dreadful peals
Of rattling thunder deafen'd ev'ry ear,
And drown'd th' affrighten'd mariners' loud cries ;
While livid lightning spread its sulphurous flames
Thro' all the dark horizon, and disclos'd
The raging seas incens'd to his destruction ;
When the good ship in which he was embarked,
Unable longer to support the tempest,
Broke, and o'erwhelm'd by the impetuous surge,
Sunk to the oozy bottom of the deep,
And left him struggling with the warring waves ;
In that dread moment, in the jaws of death,
When his strength fail'd, and ev'ry hope forsook him,
And his last breath press'd towards his trembling lips,
The neighbouring rocks, that echoed to his moan,
Return'd no sound articulate, but Charlot.

Char. The fatal tempest, whose description strikes
The hearer with astonishment, is ceased ;
And Wilmot is at rest. The fiercer storm
Of swelling passions that o'erwhelms the soul,
And rages worse than the mad foaming seas
In which he perish'd, ne'er shall vex him more.

R. Wil. Thou seem'st to think he's dead ; enjoy that
thought ;

Persuade yourself that what you wish is true,
And triumph in your falsehood—Yes, he's dead ;
You were his fate. The cruel winds and waves,
That cast him pale and breathless on the shore,
Spar'd him for greater woes—To know his Charlot,
Forgetting all her vows to him and heaven,
Had cast him from her thoughts—Then, then he died ;

But never must have rest. Ev'n now he wanders,
 A sad, repining, discontented ghost,
 The unsubstantial shadow of himself,
 And pours his plaintive groans in thy deaf ears,
 And stalks, unseen, before thee.

Char. 'Tis enough——

Detested falsehood now has done its worst.
 And art thou dead?—And would'st thou die, my Wilmot!
 For one thou thought'st unjust?—Thou soul of truth!
 What must be done?—Which way shall I express
 Unutterable woe? Or how convince
 Thy dear departed spirit of the love,
 Th' eternal love, and never-failing faith
 Of thy much injur'd, lost, despairing Charlot?

Y. Wil. Be still, my flutt'ring heart; hope not too
 soon:

Perhaps I dream, and this is all illusion.

Char. If as some teach, the mind intuitive,
 Free from the narrow bounds and slavish ties
 Of sordid earth, that circumscribe its power
 While it remains below, roving at large,
 Can trace us to our most conceal'd retreat,
 See all we act, and read our very thoughts;
 To thee, O Wilmot! kneeling I appeal,
 If e'er I swerv'd in action, word, or thought
 From the severest constancy and truth,
 Or ever wish'd to taste a joy on earth
 That center'd not in thee, since last we parted;
 May we ne'er meet again, but thy loud wrongs
 So close the ear of mercy to my cries,
 That I may never see those bright abodes
 Where truth and virtue only have admission,
 And thou inhabit'st now.

Y. Wil. Assist me, Heaven!

Preserve my reason, memory, and sense!
 O moderate my fierce tumultuous joy,
 Or their excess will drive me to distraction.
 O Charlot! Charlot! lovely virtuous maid!
 Can thy firm mind, in spite of time and absence,
 Remain unshaken, and support its truth;
 And yet thy frailer memory retain
 No image, no idea of thy lover?
 Why dost thou gaze so wildly? Look on me;
 Turn thy dear eyes this way; observe me well.
 Have scorching climates, time, and this strange habit
 So chang'd, and so disguised thy faithful Wilmot,
 That nothing in my voice, my face, or mien,
 Remains to tell my Charlot I am he?

[After viewing him some time, she approaches weeping, and gives him her hand; and then turning towards him, sinks upon his bosom.]

Why dost thou weep? Why dost thou tremble thus?
 Why doth thy panting heart and cautious touch
 Speak thee but half convinc'd? Whence are thy fears?
 Why art thou silent? Canst thou doubt me still?

Char. No, Wilmot! no; I'm blind with too much light;
 O'ercome with wonder, and oppress'd with joy,
 The struggling passions barr'd the doors of speech;
 But speech enlarg'd, affords me no relief.
 This vast profusion of extreme delight,
 Rising at once, and bursting from despair,
 Defies the aid of words, and mocks description:
 But for one sorrow, one sad scene of anguish,
 That checks the swelling torrent of my joys,
 I could not bear the transport.

Y. Wil. Let me know it:

Give me my portion of thy sorrow, Charlot !
Let me partake thy grief, or bear it for thee.

Char. Alas ! my Wilmot ! these sad tears are thine ;
They flow for thy misfortunes. I am pierced
With all the agonies of strong compassion,
With all the bitter anguish you must feel,
When you shall hear your parents——

Y. Wil. Are no more.

Char. You apprehend me wrong.

Y. Wil. Perhaps I do :

Perhaps you mean to say, the greedy grave
Was satisfied with one, and one is left
To bless my longing eyes—But which, my Charlot !
——And yet forbear to speak, till I have thought——

Char. Nay, hear me, Wilmot !

Y. Wil. I perforce must hear thee.

For I might think till death, and not determine,
Of two so dear which I could bear to lose.

Char. Afflict yourself no more with groundless fears :
Your parents both are living. Their distress,
The poverty to which they are reduced,
In spite of my weak aid, was what I mourned ;
And that in helpless age, to them whose youth
Was crown'd with full prosperity, I fear,
Is worse, much worse, than death.

Y. Wil. My joy's compleat !

My parents living, and possess'd of thee !——
From this blest hours the happiest of my life,
I'll date my rest. My anxious hopes and fears,
My weary travels, and my dangers past,
Are now rewarded all : Now I rejoice
In my success, and count my riches gain.
For know, my soul's best treasure ! I have wealth

Enough to glut ev'n avarice itself:
No more shall cruel want, or proud contempt,
Oppress the sinking spirits, or insult
The hoary heads of those who gave me being.

Char. 'Tis now, O riches, I conceive your worth;
You are not base, nor can you be superfluous,
But when misplac'd in base and sordid hands.
Fly, fly, my Wilmot! leave thy happy Charlot!
Thy filial piety, the sighs and tears
Of thy lamenting parents call thee hence.

R. Wil. I have a friend, the partner of my voyage,
Who, in the storm last night, was shipwreck'd with me.

Char. Shipwreck'd last night!—O you immortal powers!
What have you suffer'd! How was you preserv'd!

R. Wil. Let that, and all my other strange escapes
And perilous adventures, be the theme
Of many a happy winter night to come.
My present purpose was t'intreat my angel,
To know this friend, this other better Wilmot;
And come with him this evening to my father's:
I'll send him to thee.

Char. I consent with pleasure.

R. Wil. Heavens! what a night!—How shall I bear
my joy!

My parents, yours, my friends, all will be mine,
And mine, like water, air, or the free splendid sun,
The undivided portion of you all.
If such the early hopes, the vernal bloom,
The distant prospect of my future bliss,
Then what the ruddy autumn!—What the fruit!—
The full possession of thy heavenly charms!

*The tedious, dark, and stormy winter o'er;
The hind, that all its pinching hardships bore.*

*With transport sees the weeks appointed bring
 The cheerful, promis'd, gay, delightful spring ;
 The painted meadows, the harmonious woods,
 The gentle Zephyrs, and unbridled floods,
 With all their charms, his ravished thoughts employ,
 But the rich harvest must compleat his joy.*

SCENE II.

A Street in Penryn. RANDAL enters.

Rand. Poor! poor! and friendless! whither shall I
 wander,

And to what point direct my views and hopes?—
 A menial servant!—No—What shall I live,
 Here in this land of freedom, live distinguished,
 And mark'd the willing slave of some proud subject,
 And swell his useless train for broken fragments;
 The cold remains of his superfluous board?—
 I would aspire to something more and better—
 Turn thy eyes then to the prolific ocean,
 Whose spacious bosom opens to thy view:
 There deathless honour, and unenvied wealth
 Have often crown'd the brave adventurer's toils.
 This is the native uncontested right,
 The fair inheritance of ev'ry Briton
 That dares put in his claim—My choice is made:
 A long farewell to Cornwall, and to England;
 If I return—But stay, what stranger's this,
 Who, as he views me, seems to mend his pace?

Young WILMOT enters.

Y. Wil. Randal!—The dear companion of my youth!—

Sure lavish fortune means to give me all
I could desire, or ask for this blest day,
And leave me nothing to expect hereafter.

Rand. Your pardon, sir! I know but one on earth
Could properly salute me by the title
You're pleased to give me, and I would not think,
That you are he—That you are Wilmot.—

Y. Wil. Why?

Rand. Because I could not bear the disappointment
Should I be deceived.

Y. Wil. I am pleased to hear it:
Thy friendly fears better express thy thoughts
Than words could do.

Rand. O! Wilmot! O! my master!
Are you returned?

Y. Wil. I have not yet embraced
My parents—I shall see you at my father's.

Rand. No, I'm discharged from thence—O sir! such
ruin—

Y. Wil. I've heard it all, and hasten to relieve 'em:
Sure Heaven hath bless'd me to that very end:
I've wealth enough; nor shalt thou want a part.

Rand. I have a part already—I am blest
In your success, and share in all your joys.

Y. Wil. I doubt it not—But tell me, dost thou
think,

My parents not suspecting my return,
That I may visit them, and not be known?

Rand. 'Tis hard for me to judge. You are already

Grown so familiar to me, that I wonder
I knew you not at first: Yet it may be;
For you're much alter'd, and they think you dead.

T. Wil. This is certain; Charlot beheld me long,
And heard my loud reproaches, and complaints,
Without rememb'ring she had ever seen me.
My mind at ease grows wanton: I wou'd fain
Refine on happiness. Why may I not
Indulge my curiosity, and try
If it be possible by seeing first
My parents as a stranger, to improve
Their pleasure by surprize?

Rand. It may indeed
Inhance your own, to see from what despair
Your timely coming, and unhop'd success
Have given you power to raise them.

T. Wil. I remember,
E'er since we learn'd together, you excelled
In writing fairly, and could imitate
Whatever hand you saw with great exactness.
Of this I'm not so absolute a master.
I therefore beg you'll write, in Charlot's name
And character, a letter to my father;
And recommend me, as a friend of hers,
To his acquaintance.

Rand. Sir, if you desire it—
And yet—

T. Wil. Nay, no objections—'Twill save time,
Most precious with me now. For the deception,
If doing what my Charlot will approve,
'Cause done for me and with a good intent,
Deserves the name, I'll answer it myself.
If this succeeds, I purpose to defer

Discov'ring who I am till Charlot comes,
And thou, and all who love me. Ev'ry friend
Who witnesses my happiness to night,
Will, by partaking, multiply my joys.

Rand. You grow luxurious in your mental pleasures:
Could I deny you aught, I would not write
This letter. To say true, I ever thought
Your boundless curiosity a weakness.

Y. Wil. What canst thou blame in this?

Rand. Your pardon, Sir!
I only speak in general: I'm ready
T' obey your orders.

Y. Wil. I am much thy debtor;
But I shall find a time to quit thy kindness.
O Randal! but imagine to thyself
The floods of transport, the sincere delight
That all my friends will feel, when I disclose
To my astonish'd parents my return;
And then confess, that I have well contriv'd
By giving others joy t' exalt my own.

*As pain and anguish, in a generous mind,
While kept conceal'd and to ourselves confin'd,
Want half their force; so pleasure when it flows
In torrents round us more extatick grows.*

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

A Room in Old Wilmot's House. Old WILMOT and AGNES.

O. Wil. Here, take this Seneca, this haughty pedant,
Who governing the master of mankind,
An awing power imperial, prates of—patience;
And praises poverty—possess'd of millions:

—Sell him, and buy us bread. The scantiest meal
The vilest copy of his book e'er purchased,
Will give us more relief in this distress,
Than all his boasted precepts.—Nay, no tears;
Keep them to move compassion when you beg.

Agn. My heart may break, but never stoop to that.

O. Wil. Nor would I live to see it—But dispatch.

[*Exit Agnes.*]

Where must I charge this length of misery,
That gathers force each moment as it rolls,
And must at last o'erwhelm me; but on hope,
Vain, flattering, delusive, groundless hope;
A senseless expectation of relief
That has for years deceiv'd me?—Had I thought
As I do now, as wise men ever think,
When first this hell of poverty o'ertook me,
That power to die implies a right to do it,
And shou'd be used when life becomes a pain,
What plagues had I prevented?—True, my wife
Is still a slave to prejudice and fear—
I would not leave my better part, the dear
Faithful companion of my happier days,
To bear the weight of age and want alone.
—I'll try once more—

[*Weeps.*]

AGNES enters, and after her Young WILMOT.

O. Wil. Return'd, my life! so soon!—

Agn. The unexpected coming of this stranger
Prevents my going yet.

Y. Wil. You're, I presume,
The gentleman to whom this is directed. [*Gives a letter.*]
What wild neglect, the token of despair,
What indigence, what misery appears

In each disorder'd, or disfurnish'd room
Of this once gorgeous house? What discontent,
What anguish and confusion fill the faces
Of its dejected owners?

O. Wil. Sir, such welcome
As this poor house affords, you may command.
Our ever friendly neighbour—Once we hop'd
T' have called fair Charlot by a dearer name——
But we have done with hope—I pray excuse
This incoherence——We had once a son. [Weeps.]

Agn. That you are come from that dear virtuous maid,
Revives in us the mem'ry of a loss,
Which, tho' long since, we have not learn'd to bear.

Y. Wil. The joy to see them, and the bitter pain
It is to see them thus, touches my soul
With tenderness and grief, that will o'erflow.
My bosom heaves and swells, as it would burst;
My bowels move, and my heart melts within me.
——They know me not, and yet, I fear, I shall
Defeat my purpose, and betray myself. [Aside.]

O. Wil. The lady calls you here her valued friend,
Enough, tho' nothing more should be implied,
To recommend you to our best esteem,
—A worthless acquisition!—May she find
Some means that better may express her kindness;
But she, perhaps, hath purpos'd to enrich
You with herself, and end her fruitless sorrow
For one whom death alone can justify
For leaving her so long. If it be so,
May you repair his loss, and be to Charlot
A second, happier Wilmot. Partial nature,
Who only favours youth, as feeble age
Were not her offspring or below her care,

Has seal'd our doom: No second hope shall spring
From my dead loins, and Agnes' sterile womb,
To dry our tears, and dissipate despair.

Agn. The last and most abandon'd of our kind,
By heaven and earth neglected or despised,
The loathsome grave, that robb'd us of our son
And all our joys in him, must be our refuge.

Y. Wil. Let ghosts unpardon'd, or devoted fiends,
Fear without hope, and wail in such sad strains;
But grace defend the living from despair.
The darkest hours precede the rising sun;
And mercy may appear, when least expected.

O. Wil. This I have heard a thousand times repeated,
And have, believing, been as oft deceived.

Y. Wil. Behold in me an instance of its truth.
At sea twice shipwreck'd, and as oft the prey
Of lawless pirates; by the Arabs thrice
Surpris'd and robb'd on shore; and once reduced
To worse than these, the sum of all distress
That the most wretched feel on this side hell,
Ev'n slavery itself: Yet here I stand,
Except one trouble that will quickly end,
The happiest of mankind.

O. Wil. A rare example
Of fortune's caprice; apter to surprize,
Or entertain, than comfort, or instruct.
If you would reason from events, be just,
And count, when you escap'd, how many perish'd;
And draw your inf'rence thence.

Agn. Alas! who knows,
But we were rendered childless by some storm,
In which you, tho' preserv'd, might bear a part.

Y. Wil. How has my curiosity betray'd me

Into superfluous pain! I faint with fondness;
And shall, if I stay longer, rush upon them,
Proclaim myself their son, kiss and embrace them
Till their souls, transported with the excess
Of pleasure and surprize, quit their frail mansions,
And leave 'em breathless in my longing arms.
By circumstances then and slow degrees,
They must be let into a happiness
Too great for them to bear at once, and live:
That Charlot will perform: I need not feign
To ask an hour for rest. [*Aside.*] Sir, I intreat
The favour to retire where, for a while,
I may repose myself. You will excuse
This freedom, and the trouble that I give you:
'Tis long since I have slept, and nature calls.

O. Wil. I pray no more: Believe we're only troubl'd,
That you should think any excuse were needful.

R. Wil. The weight of this is some incumbrance to me;
[*Takes a casket out of his bosom, and gives it to his mother.*
And its contents of value: If you please
To take the charge of it 'till I awake,
I shall not rest the worse. If I should sleep
'Till I am ask'd for, as perhaps I may,
I beg that you would wake me,

Agn. Doubt it not:
Distracted as I am with various woes,
I shall remember that.

[*Exit.*

R. Wil. Merciless grief!
What ravage has it made! how has it chang'd
Her lovely form and mind! I feel her anguish,
And dread I know not what from her despair.
My father too—O grant them patience, Heaven!
A little longer, a few short hours more,
And all their cares, and mine, shall end for ever.

*How near is misery and joy ally'd !
 Nor eye, nor thought can their extremes divide :
 A moment's space is long, and light'ning slow
 To fate descending to reverse our woe,
 Or blast our hopes, and all our joys o'ertrow,* [Exeunt.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Scene continued. AGNES enters alone, with the Casket in her hand.

Agnes.

Who should this stranger be ?—And then this casket—
 He says it is of value, and yet trusts it,
 As if a trifle, to a stranger's hand—
 His confidence amazes me—Perhaps
 It is not what he says—I'm strongly tempted
 To open it, and see—No, let it rest.
 Why should my curiosity excite me,
 To search and pry into th' affairs of others ;
 Who have t'employ my thoughts, so many cares
 And sorrows of my own ?—With how much ease
 The spring gives way ?—Surprising ! most prodigious !
 My eyes are dazzled, and my ravished heart
 Leaps at the glorious sight—How bright's the lustre,
 How immense the worth of these fair jewels ?
 Ay, such a treasure would expel for ever
 Base poverty, and all its abject train ;
 The mean devices we're reduc'd to use
 To keep out famine, and preserve our lives
 From day to day ; the cold neglect of friends ;
 The galling scorn, or more provoking pity

Of an insulting world—Possess'd of these,
 Plenty, content, and power might take their turn,
 And lofty pride bear its aspiring head
 At our approach, and once more bend before us.
 —A pleasing dream!—'Tis past; and now I wake
 More wretched by the happiness I've lost.
 For sure it was a happiness to think,
 Tho' but a moment, such a treasure mine.
 Nay, it was more than thought—I saw and touch'd.
 The bright temptation, and I see it yet—
 'Tis here—'tis mine—I have it in possession—
 —Must I resign it? Must I give it back?
 Am I in love with misery and want?—
 To rob myself, and court so vast a loss?—
 —Retain it then—But how?—There is a way—
 Why sinks my heart? Why does my blood run cold?
 Why am I thrill'd with horror?—'Tis not choice,
 But dire necessity suggests the thought.

Old WILMOT enters.

O. Wil. The mind contented, with how little pains
 The wand'ring senses yield to soft repose,
 And die to gain new life? He's fallen asleep
 Already—Happy man!—What dost thou think,
 My Agnes, of our unexpected guest?
 He seems to me a youth of great humanity:
 Just ere he clos'd his eyes, that swam in tears,
 He wrung my hand, and press'd it to his lips;
 And with a look, that pierc'd me to the soul,
 Begg'd me to comfort thee: And—Dost thou hear me?—
 What art thou gazing on?—Fie, 'tis not well—
 This casket was deliver'd to you closed;

Why have you open'd it? Should this be known,
How mean must we appear?

Agn. And who shall know it?

O. Wil. There is a kind of pride, a decent dignity
Due to ourselves; which, spite of our misfortunes,
May be maintain'd, and cherish'd to the last.
To live without reproach, and without leave
To quit the world, shews sovereign contempt,
And noble scorn of its relentless malice.

Agn. Shews sovereign madness, and a scorn of sense,
Pursue no farther this detested theme:
I will not die, I will not leave the world
For all that you can urge, until compell'd.

O. Wil. To chace a shadow, when the setting sun
Is darting his last rays, were just as wise,
As your anxiety for fleeting life,
Now the last means for its support are failing:
Were famine not as mortal as the sword,
This warmth might be excus'd—But take thy choice;
Die how you will, you shall not die alone.

Agn. Nor live, I hope.

O. Wil. There is no fear of that.

Agn. Then we'll live both.

O. Wil. Strange folly! where's the means?

Agn. The means are there: those jewels——

O. Wil. Ha!——Take heed:

Perhaps thou dost but try me; yet take heed—
There's nought so monstrous but the mind of man
In some conditions may be brought t'approve;
Theft, sacrilege, treason, and parricide,
When flatt'ring opportunity enticed,
And desperation drove, have been committed
By those who once would start to hear them nam'd,

Agn. And add to these detested suicide,
Which, by a crime much less, we may avoid.

O. Wil. Th' inhospitable murder of our guest!—
How could'st thou form a thought so very tempting,
So advantageous, so secure, and easy;
And yet so cruel, and so full of horror?

Agn. 'Tis less impiety, less against nature,
To take another's life, than end our own.

O. Wil. It is no matter, whether this or that
Be, in itself, the less or greater crime:
Howe'er we may deceive ourselves or others,
We act from inclination, not by rule,
Or none could act amiss—And that all err,
None but the conscious hypocrite denies.

—O! what is man, his excellence and strength,
When in an hour of trial and desertion,
Reason, his noblest power, may be suborn'd
To plead the cause of vile assassination.

Agn. You're too severe: Reason may justly plead
For her own preservation.

O. Wil. Rest contented:
Whate'er resistance I may seem to make,
I am betray'd within: My will's seduced,
And my whole soul infected. The desire
Of life returns, and brings with it a train
Of appetites, that rage to be supplied.
Whoever stands to parley with temptation,
Does it to be o'ercome.

Agn. Then nought remains,
But the swift execution of a deed
That is not to be thought on, or delay'd.
We must dispatch him sleeping: Should he wake,
'Twere madness to attempt it.

O. Wil. True, his strength
Single is more, much more than ours united ;
So may his life, perhaps, as far exceed
Ours in duration, should he 'scape this snare.
Gen'rous, unhappy man ! O ! what could move thee
To put thy life and fortune in the hands
Of wretches mad with anguish !

Agn. By what means ?

By stabbing, suffocation, or by strangling
Shall we effect his death ?

O. Wil. Why, what a fiend !——
How cruel, how remorseless and impatient
Have pride and poverty made thee ?

Agn. Barbarous man !
Whose wasteful riots ruin'd our estate,
And drove our son, ere the first down had spread
His rosy cheeks, spite of my sad presages,
Earnest intreaties, agonies and tears,
To seek his bread 'mongst strangers, and to perish
In some remote, inhospitable land——
The loveliest youth, in person and in mind,
'That ever crown'd a groaning mother's pains !
Where was thy pity, where thy patience then ?
'Thou cruel husband ! thou unnat'ral father !
'Thou most remorseless, most ungrateful man,
'To waste my fortune, rob me of my son ;
'To drive me to despair, and then reproach me
For being what thou'st made me.

O. Wil. Dry thy tears :
I ought not to reproach thee. I confess
That thou hast suffer'd much : So have we both.
But chide no more : I'm wrought up to thy purpose.
The poor, ill-fated, unsuspecting victim,

Ere he reclin'd him on the fatal couch,
From which he's ne'er to rise, took off the sash,
And costly dagger that thou saw'st him wear;
And thus, unthinking, furnish'd us with arms
Against himself. Which shall I use?

Agn. The sash.

If you make use of that, I can assist.

O. Wil. No;

'Tis a dreadful office, and I'll spare
Thy trembling hands the guilt——steal to the door,
And bring me word if he be still asleep. [*Exit Agnes.*]
Or I'm deceiv'd, or he pronounc'd himself
The happiest of mankind. Deluded wretch!
Thy thoughts are perishing, thy youthful joys,
Touch'd by the icy hand of grisly death,
Are with'ring in their bloom——But thought extinguish'd,
He'll never know the loss, nor feel the bitter
Pangs of disappointment——Then I was wrong
In counting him a wretch. To die well pleas'd,
Is all the happiest of mankind can hope for.
To be a wretch, is to survive the loss
Of every joy, and even hope itself,
As I have done——Why do I mourn him then?
For, by the anguish of my tortur'd soul,
He's to be envy'd, if compar'd with me.

AGNES enters with Young Wilmot's dagger.

Agn. The stranger

Sleeps at present; but so restless
His slumbers seem, they can't continue long.
Come, come, dispatch——Here I've secur'd his dagger.

O. Wil. O Agnes! Agnes! if there be a hell, 'tis just
We should expect it. [*Goes to take the dagger, but lets it fall.*]

Agn. Nay, for shame, shake off this panic, and be more
your self.

O. Wil. What's to be done? On what had we determin'd?

Agn. You're quite dismay'd. I'll do

The deed myself.

[*Takes up the dagger,*

O. Wil. Give me the fatal steel.

'Tis but a single murder,

Necessity, impatience, and despair,

The three wide mouths, of that true Cerberus,

Grim Poverty, demands—They shall be stopp'd.

Ambition, persecution, and revenge

Devour their millions daily: And shall I—

But follow me, and see how little cause

You had to think there was the least remains

Of manhood, pity, mercy, or remorse

Left in this savage breast.

[*Going the wrong way.*

Agn. Where do you go?

The street is that way.

O. Wil. True! I had forgot.

Agn. Quite, quite confounded.

O. Wil. Well, I recover.

—I shall find the way.

[*Exit,*

Agn. O softly! softly!

The least noise undoes us.

—Still I fear him:

—No now he seems determined—O! that pause,

That cowardly pause!—His resolution fails—

'Tis wisely done to lift your eyes to heaven;

When did you pray before? I have no patience—

How he surveys him? What a look was there?—

How full of anguish, pity, and remorse—

—He'll never do it—Strike, or give it o'er—

—No, he recovers—But that trembling arm

May miss its aim; and if he fails, we're lost——

'Tis done——O! no; he lives, he struggles yet.

Y. Wil. O! father! father!

[*In another room.*]

Agn. Quick; repeat the blow.

What pow'r shall I invoke to aid thee, Wilmot!

——Yet hold thy hand——Inconstant, wretched woman!

What, doth my heart recoil, and bleed with him

Whose murder you contriv'd——O Wilmot! Wilmot!

CHARLOT, MARIA, EUSTACE, RANDAL, and others
enter.

Char. What strange neglect! The doors are all unbarr'd,
And not a living creature to be seen.

Old WILMOT and AGNES enter.

Char. Sir, we are come to give and to receive
A thousand greetings——Ha! what can this mean?
Why do you look with such amazement on us?—
Are these your transports for your son's return?—
Where is my Wilmot? Has he not been here?—
Would he defer your happiness so long,
Or could a habit so disguise your son,
That you refus'd to own him?

Agn. Heard you that?

What prodigy of horror is disclosing,
To render murder venial.

O. Wil. Pr'ythee, peace:

The miserable damn'd suspend their howling,
And the swift orbs are fix'd in deep attention.

Y. Wil. [*Groans.*] Oh! oh! oh!

Eust. Sure that deep groan came from the inner room.

Rand. It did, and seem'd the voice of one expiring.

Merciful Heaven! where will these terrors end?
That is the dagger my young master wore;
And see, his father's hands are stain'd with blood.

[*Young Wilmot groans again.*]

Eust. Another groan! Why do we stand to gaze
On these dumb phantoms of despair and horror?
Let us search farther: Randal, shew the way.

Cbar. This is the third time those fantastic forms
Have forc'd themselves upon my mental eyes,
And sleeping gave me more than waking pains.
O you eternal Pow'rs! if all your mercy
To wretched mortals be not quite extinguish'd,
And terrors only guard your awful thrones,
Remove this dreadful vision—Let me wake,
Or sleep the sleep of death.

[*Exeunt Charlot, Maria, Eustace, Randal, &c.*]

O. Wil. Sleep those who may;
I know my lot is endless perturbation.

Agn. Let life forsake the earth, and light the sun,
And death and darkness bury in oblivion
Mankind and all their deeds, that no posterity
May ever rise to hear our horrid tale,
Or view the grave of such detested parricides.

O. Wil. Curses and deprecations are in vain:
The sun will shine, and all things have their course;
When we, the curse and burthen of the earth,
Shall be absorb'd, and mingled with its dust.
Our guilt and desolation must be told,
From age to age, to teach desponding mortals,
How far beyond the reach of human thought
Heaven, when incens'd, can punish—Die thou first.

[*Stabs Agnes.*]

I dare not trust thy weakness.

Agn. Ever kind,
But most in this.

O. Wil. I will not long survive thee.

Agn. Do not accuse thy erring mother, Wilmot!
With too much rigour when we meet above.
Rivers of tears, and ages spent in howling
Could ne'er express the anguish of my heart.
To give thee life for life, and blood for blood,
Is not enough. Had I ten thousand lives,
I'd give them all to speak my penitence
Deep, and sincere, and equal to my crime. [Dies.

CHARLOT, led by MARIA and RANDAL; EUSTACE and
the rest enter.

Char. Welcome, Despair! I'll never hope again—
Why have you forc'd me from my Wilmot's side?
Let me return—Unhand me—Let me die.
Patience, that till this moment ne'er forsook me,
Has took her flight; and my abandon'd mind,
Rebellious to a lot so void of mercy
And so unexpected, rages to madness.
—O thou! who know'st our frame, who know'st these
woes
Are more than human fortitude can bear,
O! take me, take me hence, ere I relapse;
And in distraction, with unhallow'd tongue,
Again arraign your mercy— [Faints.

Eust. Unhappy maid! This strange event my strength
Can scarce support; no wonder thine should fail.
—How shall I vent my grief? O Wilmot! Wilmot!
Thou truest lover, and thou best of friends,
Are these the fruits of all thy anxious cares

For thy ungrateful parents?—Cruel fiends!
To use thee thus! To recompense with death
Thy most unequall'd duty and affection!

O. Wil. What whining fool art thou, who would'st usurp
My sovereign right of grief?—Was he thy son?—
Say! Canst thou shew thy hands reeking with blood,
That flow'd, thro' purer channels, from thy loins?

Eust. Forbid, it Heav'n! that I should know such guilt:
Yet his sad fate demands commiseration.

O Wil. Compute the sands that bound the spacious ocean,
And swell their number with a single grain;
Increase the noise of thunder with thy voice;
Or when the raging wind lays nature waste,
Assist the tempest with thy feeble breath;
Add water to the sea, and fire to Etna;
But name not thy faint sorrow with the anguish
Of a curs'd wretch who only hopes for this

[*Stabbing himself.*]

To change the scene, but not relieve his pain.

Rand. A dreadful instance of the last remorse!
May all your woes end here.

O. Wil. O would they end
A thousand ages hence, I then should suffer
Much less than I deserve. Yet let me say,
You'll do but justice, to inform the world,
This horrid deed, that punishes itself,
Was not intended as he was our son;
For that we knew not, 'till it was too late.
Proud and impatient under our afflictions,
While heaven was labouring to make us happy,
We brought this dreadful ruin on ourselves.
Mankind may learn—but—oh!——

[*Dies.*]

Rand. The most will not:

*Let us at least be wiser, nor complain,
Of heaven's mysterious ways, and awful reign :
By our bold censures we invade his throne
Who made mankind, and governs but his own :
Tho' youthful Wilmot's sun be set ere noon,
The ripe in virtue never die too soon.*

[Exeunt,



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